



Sappho
Complete Works

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Sappho

Complete Works

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The Complete Works of

SAPPHO

(630 c.-570 BC c)



Contents

The Translations

2011 DUAL TEXT TRANSLATION by Peter Russell

1907 TRANSLATION by Bliss Carman

1910 TRANSLATION by John Myers O'Hara

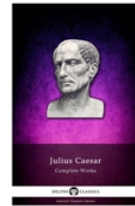
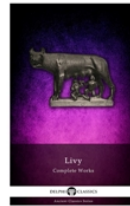
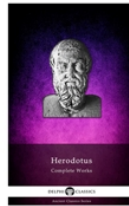
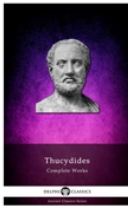


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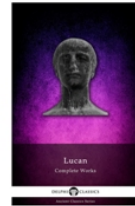
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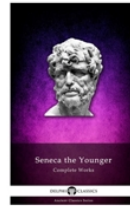
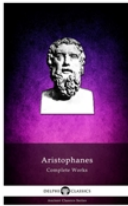
Historians



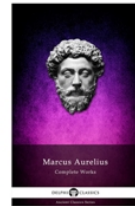
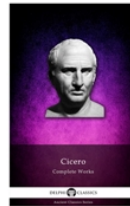
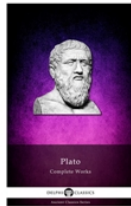
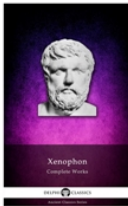
Epic Poets



Dramatists



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The Complete Works of

SAPPHO



By Delphi Classics, 2015

The Translations



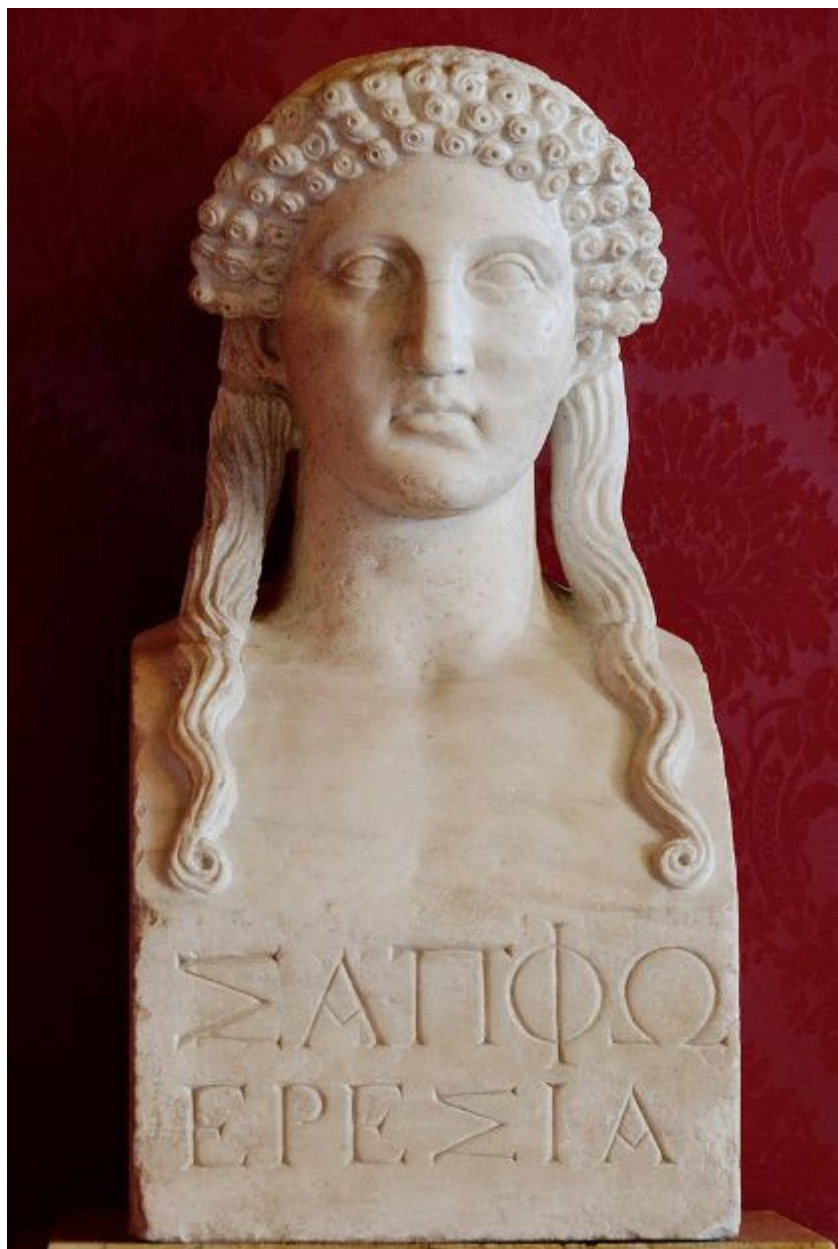
Lesbos – Sappho's place of birth

2011 DUAL TEXT TRANSLATION by Peter Russell



Sappho was an Ancient Greek poetess, born on the island of Lesbos sometime between 630 and 612 BC, and she died around 570 BC. Sadly, very little is known about her life. She appears to have suffered exile once in Sicily, indicating a political life. She is most famously known for the homosexual love expressed in her work, yet she also composed lines to a heterosexual lover, and the Suda records the name of a husband called Cercyclas of Andros, a wealthy man. However, some believe this to be false information.

The majority of her poetry, which was greatly admired throughout antiquity, has been lost. However, her vast reputation has endured through surviving fragments. Although many are little more than a few words, they all reveal telling signs of her beautiful and consummate artistry. As recently as 2005 a new poem was discovered by archaeologists, the papyrus having been used to mummify a body two thousand years ago and so surviving to our modern age. This last, almost complete, poem has also been included at the end of the eBook, fragment 117.



Bust of Sappho — Roman copy of a Greek original of the 5th century BC

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Sappho depicted by a Brygos painter, c. 480 BC

PRONOUNCING ANCIENT GREEK



Here is a brief guide to pronouncing Ancient Greek, allowing you to voice aloud Sappho's original text. You may wish to bookmark this page for future reference.

The Letters

Like the Roman alphabet, Greek has separate capitals and lowercase letters, which are all provided here with their Roman equivalents.

A, α	a
B, β	b
Γ, γ	g
Δ, δ	d
E, ε	e
Z, ζ	z
H, η	ê
Θ, θ	th
I, ι	i
K, κ	k
Λ, λ	l
M, μ	m
N, ν	n
Ξ, ξ	x
O, ο	o
Π, π	p
P, ρ	r
Σ, σ, ς	s
T, τ	t
Y, υ	y
Φ, φ	ph
X, χ	ch

Ψ, ψ ps
Ω, ω ô

Consonants

Most of the consonants are pronounced exactly as in English, except for:

The g is always hard as in ‘golf’, never soft.

z is pronounced zd.

x is pronounced with a ks sound.

r is rolled as in Spanish or Italian.

ps is always pronounced as two sounds

With aspirated consonants ph, th, ch and rh, ignore the h.

The ch should be pronounced the same as a k.

Diphthongs

ai as in aisle

ei as in vein

oi as in oil

au as ow in cow

eu as e of get followed by oo

ou as in soup

Ποικιλόθρον' ἀθάνατ' Ἀφροδιτα,
 παῖ Δίος, δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε
 μή μ' ἄσαισι μήτ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
 πότνια, θῦμον.

ἀλλά τυίδ' ἔλθ', αἵποτα κατέρωτα
 τᾶς ἔμας αὐδῶς αἰοῖσα πήλγι
 ἔκλυες πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα
 χρύσιον ἦλθες

ἄρμ' ὑποζεύξαια, κάλοι δέ σ' ἄγον
 ὤκεες στρουῖθι περὶ γᾶς μελαίνας
 πύκνα δινεῦντες πτέρ' ἀπ' ὠράνω
 αἴθερος διὰ μέσσω.

αἴψα δ' ἐχίκοντο, σὺ δ', ὦ μάσαιρα
 μειδιάσας ἀθάνατῳ προσώπῳ,
 ἦρ' ὅττι δηῖτε πέπονθα κῶττι
 δῆγτε κάλημι

κῶττι μοι μάλιστα θέλω γένεσθαι
 μαινόλα θυμῷ, τίνα δηῖτε πείθῳ
 μαῖς ἄγην ἐς σὺν φιλότατα τίς τ, ὦ
 Πσάπφ', ἀδίκηει;

καὶ γάρ αἱ φεύγει, ταχέως διώξει,
 αἱ δὲ δῶρα μὴ δέκετ ἀλλὰ δώσει,
 αἱ δὲ μὴ φίλει ταχέως φιλήσει,
 κῶκ ἐθέλοισα.

ἔλθε μοι καὶ νῦν, χαλεπᾶν δὲ λῦσον
 ἐκ μερίμναν ὅσσα δέ μοι τέλεσσαι
 θῦμος ἱμμέρρει τέλεσον, σὺ δ' αὐτά
 σύμμαχος ἔσσο.

Divine Aphrodite of the glittering throne, daughter of Zeus, weaver of troubles, I pray you, do not defeat my soul with anguish and cares, my Queen. But come here if ever before you did hear my voice and hearken, leaving the golden house of your Father; that time you came with chariot yoked, swift birds drawing you, their swift wings fluttering over the shady earth, from heaven through the mid air. Quickly they came and you blessed me with immortal expression, as smiling you asked what has now befallen me and why do I call and what do I desire most in my heart's madness? What beautiful lover would you now make me love you? Who wrongs you, my Sappho? For even if she flees you, she shall soon follow; and if she refuses your gifts, she shall shortly give them and if she does not love, she shall soon love, however unwilling. Come, I implore you, release me from harsh concerns, and let my heart achieve all that it is desired, so long as you are my ally.

Poetry Contents Table

φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος τηέοισιν
 ἔμμεν ὦνερ ὅστις ἐναντίος τοι
 ἰζάνει καὶ πλασίον ἄδυ
 φωνεύσας ὑπακούει

καὶ γαλαίσας ἡμερόεν τὸ δὴ ᾿μάν
 καρδίαν ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτόασεν,
 ὥς γὰρ εὕιδον βροχέως σε, φώνας
 οὐδὲν ἔτ' ἔικει,

ἀλλὰ κάμ μὲν γλωσσα φέαγε, λέπτον
 δ' αὐτικά χρῶ πῦρ ὑπαδεδρόμακεν,
 ὀπάτεσσι δ' οὐδὲν ὀρημ',
 ἐπιρρόμβεισι δ' ἄκουαι.

ἀ δέ μ' ἰδρωσ κακχέεται, τρόμος δὲ
 παῖσαν ἄγρει χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας
 ἔμμι, τεθνάκην δ' ὀλιγω ᾿πιδεύφη
 φαίνομαι [ἄλλα].
 πᾶν τόλματον [.....]

That person seems to me the equal of the gods, who sits in your presence and listens to your sweet voice and beautiful laughter; indeed it makes my heart beat swiftly in my breast. When I see you for a short time, I am speechless, my tongue becomes useless and suddenly a deft flame steals under my skin; my eyes see nothing, my ears chime, while sweat pours and my entire body is seized with convulsions. I am paler than grass and in my madness I believe I am almost dead, but I must dare...

3

Αστερες μέν ἄμφι κάλαν σελάνναν
ἄιψ ἀπυκρύπτοισι φάεννον εἶδος,
ὅπποτα πλήθοισα μάλιστα λάμπησ
ἀργυρία γᾶν.

The stars around the wide moon lose all their shining beauty, as she
illuminates the whole earth with silver.

Poetry Contents Table

Οἱ μὲν ἱππῶν στρότον οἱ δὲ πέσδων
οἱ δὲ νάων φαῖς' ἐπὶ γᾶν μέλαιναν
ἔ]μμεναι κάλλιστον ἔγω δὲ κῆν'
ὅττω τίς ἔπαιται.

πά]γχυ δ' εὖμαρες σύνετον πόησαι
πά]ντι τ[οῦ]τ'. ἂ γὰρ πόλυ περσκόπεισα
κά]λλος ἀνθρώπων Ἑλένα [τὸ]ν ἄνδρα
[κρίνεν ἄρ]ιστον,

ὅς τὸ πᾶν] σέβας τροῖα[ς ὅ]λεσσε[ε,
κωὺδὲ πα]ῖδος οὐδε [φίλ]ων το[κ]ήων
μᾶλλον] ἐμνάσθη, ἀ[λλὰ] παράγαγ' αὐταν
πῆλε φίλει]σαν,

Ὡρος. εὖκ]αμπτον γαρ [ἀεὶ τὸ θῆλυ]
αἷ κέ] τις κούφως τ[ὸ πάρον ν]οήσῃ.
οὐ]δὲ νῦν, Ἀνακτορί[α, τ]ὸ μέμναι
δῆ] παρειοῖσας,

τᾶ]ς κε βολλοίμαν ἔρατόν τε βᾶμα
κ]αμάρυγμα λάμπρον ἴδην προσώπω
ἦ τὰ λύδων ἄρματα κᾶν ὄπλοισι
πεσδομ]άχεντας

εἰ μὲν ἴδ]μεν οὐ δύνατον γένεσθαι
λῶστ'] ὄν' ἀνθρώποις, πεδέχην δ' ἄραστηαι,
[τῶν πέδειχόν ἐστι βρότοις λῶον]
[ἦ λελάθεσθαι.]

Some say that the most beautiful thing on the dark Earth is a host of cavalry, and some claim a host of foot soldiers, and others say a fleet of ships; but for me it is my lover. And anyone can understand this. When Helen, the most beautiful of all, chose love, destroying the honour of Troy, though little more than a child or parent herself, yet

she was led by Love, giving her heart away, since woman is easily lead astray, when she takes little account of those dear to her. Thus, Anactoria, it appears you do not remember that when she is with you, I would rather hear the gentle sound of her footfall than see all of Lydia's chariots and armoured footmen. In this world, I know that man cannot have the best; yet to pray for a part is better than to go without...

Poetry Contents Table

ἀμφὶ δ' ὕδωρ
 ψῖχρον ὄνεμος κελάδει δι' ὕσδων
 μαλίνων, αἰθυσσομένων δὲ φύλλων
 κῶμα κατάρρει.

By the cool stream, the breeze murmurs through apple boughs and slumbers whisper from trembling leaves.

Poetry Contents Table

6

Ἦ σε κύπρος καὶ Πάφος ἢ Πάνορμος

If you, Cyprus or Paphos or Panormos...

Poetry Contents Table

Σοί δ' ἔγω δεύκας ἔπι βῶμον ἄγος

...

καπιλείῳ τοι ...

But for you I will bring to the altar a young, white goat and add a libation.

Poetry Contents Table

... Ἔλθε, Κύπρι,
Χρυσίασιν ἐν κυλίκεσσιν ἄβραις
συμμεμιγμένον θαλίασι νέκταρ
οἶνοχόεισα.

Come, goddess of Cyprus, and with golden cups serve nectar blended
with joys...

Poetry Contents Table

9

Αἶθ' ἔγο χρυσοστέφαν' Ἀφρόδιτα,
τόνδε τὸν πάλον λαχόν.

May I be the victor of this prize, O golden-crested Aphrodite.

Poetry Contents Table

Αἶ με τιμίαν ἐπόησαν ἔργα
τὰ σφὰ δοῖσαι;

Who offered me gifts, honouring me?

Poetry Contents Table

... Τάδε νῦν ἐταίραις
ταῖς ἔμμοισι τέρπνα κάλως ἀείσω.

I will sing this skilfully to please my friends.

Poetry Contents Table

... Ὅτινας γὰρ
εὖ θέω κῆνοί με μάλιστα σίννονται

For you, that I do good, harms me the most.

Poetry Contents Table

13

Ἔγω δὲ κῆν' ὅττω τις ἔπαται.

But that which you desire...

Poetry Contents Table

14

ταῖς καλαῖς ὕμνιν [τὸ] νόημα τῶμον
οἱ διάμειπτον.

To you, beautiful maidens, my mind does not change.

Poetry Contents Table

....Ἔγων δ' ἐμαῦτα
τοῦτο σύνοιδα.

And this I feel too.

Poetry Contents Table

ταισι [δέ] ψυχροσ μέν ἔγεντο θυμος
 παρ δ' ἴεισι τὰ πτέρα ...

Yet the soul within them turned cold and down dropped their wings.

Poetry Contents Table

... κατ' ἔμον στάλαγμον,
τὸν δ' ἐπιπλάζοντες ἅμοι φέροιεν
καὶ μελεδῶναις.

From my suffering, let gathering winds bear it and all my cares away.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἀρτίως μ' ἂ χρυσοπέδιλλος Ἀύως.

Just then golden-sandalled Dawn called...

Poetry Contents Table

... Πὸδας δέ
ποίκιλος μάσλησ ἐκάλυπτε, Λύδιον κάλον ἔργον.

A broidered band of beautiful Lydian work clad her feet.

Poetry Contents Table

... Παντοδάπαισ μεμιγμένα χροίαισιν.

Pierced with countless colours.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἔμεθεν δ' ἔχθισθα λάθαν.

You forget me...

Poetry Contents Table

... ἢ τιν' ἄλλον
[μᾶλλον] ἀνθρώπων ἔμεθεν φιλησθα.

Or love another more than me...

Poetry Contents Table

Οὐ τι μοι ὕμμεσ.

You are nothing to me.

Poetry Contents Table

Σκιδναμένας ἐν στήθεσιν ὄργας
μαγυλάκαν γλῶσσαν πεφυλάχθαι.

When anger stirs the breast, stop your tongue from barking foolishly.

Poetry Contents Table

Αἰ δ' ἦχες ἔσλων ἡμερον ἢ κάλων,
 καὶ μή τι φείπεν γλῶσσο' ἐκύκα κάκον,
 αἶδωσ' κέ σ' οὐ κίχανεν ὄππατ'
 ἄλλ' ἔλεγες περὶ τῷ δικαίωσ.

If you had wished for good or noble things, rather than use your
 tongue for wicked speech, shame would not have shown from your
 eyes, though you spoke with honesty.

Poetry Contents Table

Στάθι κᾶντα φίλος,....
καὶ τὰν ἔπ' ὅσσοις ἀμπέτασον χάριν.

Face me, loved one; and unveil the beauty in your eyes.

Poetry Contents Table

Χρύσει δ' ἐρέβινθοι ἐπ' αἰόνων ἐφύοντο.

And gold stretched along the shores.

Poetry Contents Table

καὶ ποθήω καὶ μάομαι.

I desire and I seek.

Poetry Contents Table

Λάτω καὶ Νιόβα μάλα μὲν φίλαι ἦσαν ἑταιραι.

Lato and Niobe were the dearest of friends.

Poetry Contents Table

Μνάσεσθαί τινά φαμι καὶ ὕστερον ἀμμέων.

I believe men will remember us in the future.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἡράμαν μὲν ἔγω σέθεν, Ἄτθι, πάλαι πότα.

I loved you, Atthis, a long time ago.

Poetry Contents Table

Σμίκρα μοι παῖς ἔμμεν ἐφαίνεο κᾶχαρις.

To me you seemed a small and ungainly child.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἄλλ' ὄνμῃ μαγαλύννεις δακτυλίῳ πέρι.

Foolish woman! Be not proud for a ring.

Poetry Contents Table

Οὐκ οἶδ' ὅττι θέω, δύο μοι τὰ νοήματα.

I do not know what to do: I have two minds.

Poetry Contents Table

Πσαύην δ' οὐ δοκίμοιμ' ὀράνω δύσι πάχεσιν.

With both my arms, I do not seek to touch the sky.

Poetry Contents Table

Ὡς δὲ παῖς πέδα μάτερα πεπτερύτωμαι.

So like a child calling its mother, I tremble.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἦρος ἄγγελος ἱμερόφωνος ἄιδων.

The messenger of spring, the sweet-toned nightingale.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἔρος δαῦτέ μ' ὁ λυσιμέλες δόνει,
γλυκύπικρον ἀμάχανον ὄρπετον.

Now inescapable Love overcomes and shakes my soul, filling me
with bitter-sweetness.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἄτθι σοὶ δ' ἔμεθ' ἐν μὲν ἀπήχθετο
φροντίσδεν, ἔπι δ' Ἀνδρομέδαν πότῃ.

But to you, Athis, thinking of me is hateful, as you flee to
Andromeda.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἔρος δαῦτ' ἐτίναξεν ἔμοι φρένας,
ἄνεμος κατ' ὄρος δρύσιν ἐμπέσων.

Now Eros stirs my soul, a mountain wind overwhelming the oak
trees.

Poetry Contents Table

Ότα πάννυχος ἄσφι κατάγει.

Sleep holds them all night long.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἄγε δὴ χέλυ δῖά μοι φωνάεσσα γένοιο.

Come, O divine being, give up your thoughts to me.

Poetry Contents Table

Κάπάλαισ ὑποθύμιδας
πλέκταισ ἀμπ' ἀπαλα δέρρα

And gracefully woven garlands on a tender neck.

Poetry Contents Table

Γέλλωσ παιδοφιλωτέρα.

Likes children more than Gello.

Poetry Contents Table

Μάλα δὴ κεκορημένας Γόργωσ.

So tired of Gorgo.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἔγω δ' ἐπὶ μαλθάκαν τύλαν σπολέω μέλεα.

So on a soft cushion I place down my limbs

Poetry Contents Table

Κῆ δ' ἀμβροσία μὲν κράτηρ ἐκέκρατο,
 Ἑρμῆς δ' ἔλεν ὄλπιν θεοῖσιν οἰνοχόησαι.
 κῆνοι δ' ἅπα πάντες καρχήσια τ' ἦχον
 κάλειβον ἀράσαντο δὲ πάμπαν ἔσλα
 τῷ γάμβρῳ.

And the bowl of ambrosia was mixed, Hermes taking the ladle to pour for the gods; then all held their cups and offered their libation, wishing good fortune to the bridegroom.

Poetry Contents Table

Δέδυκε μὲν ἅ σελάννα
καὶ Πληΐαδες, μέσαι δὲ
νύκτες πάρα δ' ἔρχετ' ὥρα,
ἔγω δὲ μόνα κατεύδω.

The moon and the Pleiades set; it is midnight. Time passes and I lie alone.

Poetry Contents Table

Πλήρης μὲν ἐφαίνεται ἅ σελάννα
αἱ δ' ὥς περὶ Βῶμον ἐσταθησαν.

The full moon rose; the women stood, as though around an altar.

Poetry Contents Table

Κρήσσαι νύ ποτ' ὧδ' ἐμμελέως πόδεσσιν
 ὠρχεῖντ' ἀπάλοις ἀμφ' ἐπέντα Βῶμον
 πόας τέπεν ἄνθος μάλακον μάτεισαι.

Therefore, at times, the Cretan women, soft-footed, dance in time
 around the resplendent altar, trampling the luscious bloom of grass.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἄβρα δηῦτε παχίᾳ σπόλᾳ ἀλλόμαν.

Lightly, I leapt in the caressing garment.

Poetry Contents Table

Φαῖσι δὴ ποτα Λήδαν ὑακινθίνων
[ὑπ' ἀνθέων] πεπυκαδμένον
εὖρην ὦιον.

They say Leda once discovered an egg beneath the hyacinths.

Poetry Contents Table

Ὅφθαλμοῖς δὲ μέλαις νύκτος ἄωρος.

And murky-eyed Sleep, the child of Night.

Poetry Contents Table

Χρυσοφάη θεράπαιναν Ἀφροδίτας.

Shining like gold the handmaiden of Aphrodite.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἔχει μὲν Ἀνδρομέδα κάλαν ἀμοιβάν.

Andromeda received a beautiful prize.

Poetry Contents Table

Πσάπφοι τί τὰν πολύολβον Ἀφρόδιταν;

Sappho, why do you worship Aphrodite, who is the happiest?

Poetry Contents Table

Δεῦτέ νυν ἄβραι Χάριτες, καλλίκομοί τε Μοῖσαι.

Now, come, tender Graces and graceful-haired Muses.

Poetry Contents Table

Πάρθενον ἀδύφωνον.

The sweet-toned maiden.

Poetry Contents Table

Καθνύσκει Κυθέρη, ἄβρος Ἄδωνις, τί κε θεῖμεν,
Καττύπτεσθε κόραι καὶ κατερείκεσθε χίτωνας.

Tender Adonis now dies, O Cythera, what can we do?
O maidens, beat your breasts and tear your garments.

Poetry Contents Table

Ὅ τὸν Ἄδωνιν.

O, Adonis.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἔλθοντ' ἐξ οὐρανῶ πορφυρίαν [ἔχοντα]
περθέμενον χλάμυν.

Coming from the heavens, dressed in purple robes.

Poetry Contents Table

Βροδοπάχεες ἄγναι Χάριτες, δεῦτε Διος κόραι.

Come, rose-armed Graces, Zeus' virgin daughters.

Poetry Contents Table

...Ὁ δ' Ἄρευσ φαῖσι κεν Ἄφαιστον ἄγνη Βίᾱ.

Yet Ares claimed he would drag Hephaestus with force.

Poetry Contents Table

—— Πολλὰ δ' ἀνάριθμα
ποτήρια καλαίφισ.

You drain innumerable drinking cups.

Poetry Contents Table

Κατθανοῖσα δὲ κείσεται πῶτα, κὼδ' ἑναιμὸς σέθεν
 ἔσσειτ' οὔτε τότε οὔτ' ὕστερον. οὐ γὰρ πεδέχεις βρόδων
 τῶν ἐκ Πιρίας ἀλλ' ἀφάνησ' κήν' Ἀΐδα δόμοις
 φοιτάσεις πεδ' ἀμαύρων νέκυν' ἐκπεποταμένα.

Forever you shall lie dead nor will there be any remembrance of you
 then, as you have none of Pieria's; instead you shall wander
 unknown in the house of Hades, mingling with the shadowy dead.

Poetry Contents Table

Οὐδ' ἴαν δοκίμοιμι προσίδοισαν φάος ἁλίῳ
ἔσσεσθαι σοφίαν πάρθενον εἰς οὐδένα πω χρόνον τοιαύταν.

I believe the woman that has your wisdom will never see the
sunlight.

Poetry Contents Table

Τίς δ' ἀγροιώτισ τοι θέλγει νόον,
οὐκ ἐπισταμένα τὰ βράκ' ἔλκην
ἐπὶ τῶν σφύρων;

What country girl casts a spell on you, not knowing how to draw her
dress from her ankles?

Poetry Contents Table

Ἦρων ἐξεδίδαξ' ἐκ Γυάρων τὰν τανυσίδρομον.

I taught Hero of Gyara, the swift runner.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἄλλὰ τις οὐκ ἔμμι παλιγκότων
ὄργαν, ἀλλ' ἀβάκην τὰν φρέν' ἔχω.

I have not a harmful nature, but a calm temper.

Poetry Contents Table

Αὐτὰρ ὀραῖαι στεφανηπλόκευν.

Then the sweet maidens wove the garlands.

Poetry Contents Table

—— Σύ τε κᾶμος θερόπων Ἔρος.

You and my servant Eros.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἄλλ' ἔων φίλος ἄμμιν [ἄλλο]
 λέχος ἄρνυσω νεώτερον
 οὐ γὰρ τλάσομ' ἔγω ξυνοίκην
 νεῶ γ' ἔσσα γεραιτερα.

For if you love me, choose another, younger spouse, for I will not
 suffer to live with you, as an old woman with a young man.

Poetry Contents Table

Εὐμορφοτέρα Μνασιδῖκα τᾷς ἀπάλας Γυρίνῳσ.

More pleasing is Mnasidika than tender Gyrinno.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἀσαροτέρας οὐγδαμ' ἐπ' ὧ π' ἄννα σεθεν τύχοισα.

I never found someone more disdainful than you, O Anna.

Poetry Contents Table

Σὺ δὲ στεφάνοις, α Δίκα περθέσαθ' ἐράταις φόβαισιν,
 ὄρπακας ἀνήτοιο συν ῥραῖς' ἀπάλαισι χέψιν,
 ἐγάνθεσιν ἔκ γὰρ πέλεται καὶ χάριτος μακαιρᾶν
 μᾶλλον προτέρην, ἀστερφανώτοισι δ' ἀπυστερέφονται.

O Dica, set garlands upon your beautiful hair, weaving plant sprigs
 with your delicate hands; for those who wear attractive blossoms will
 surely rank first, even among the Goddesses, who frown upon those
 without garlands.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἔγω δὲ φίλημ' ἀβροσύναν, καὶ μοι τὸ λάμπρον
ἔρος ἀελίῳ καὶ τὸ κάλον λέλογχεν.

I adore elegance and for me Eros has the sun's beauty and brilliance.

Poetry Contents Table

Κὰμ μὲν τε τύλαν κασπολέω.

Down I placed the cushion.

Poetry Contents Table

Ὁ πλοῦτος ἄνευ σεῦ γ' ἀρέτα 'στ' οὐκ ἀσίνης πάροικος,
ἢ δ' ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων κρᾶσις εὐδαιμονίας ἔχει το ἄκρον.

Wealth without you is nothing, and yet having both is best.

Poetry Contents Table

Αὐτὰ δὲ σύ Καλλιόπα.

And you too, Calliope.

Poetry Contents Table

Δαύοις ἀπάλας ἐτάρας ἐν στήθεσιν.

You sleep on the breast of your lover.

Poetry Contents Table

Δεῦρο δηῦτε Μοῖσαι χρύσιον λίποισαι.

Here now, you Muses, leave your golden homes...

Poetry Contents Table

Ἔστι μοι κάλα πάισ χρυσίοισιν ἀνθέμοισιν
 ἐμφέρην ἔχουσα μόρφαν, Κλῆϊς ἀγαπάτα,
 ἀντι τᾷς ἔγω οὐδὲ Λυδίαν παῖσαν οὐδ' ἔρανναν.

I have a beautiful daughter formed like golden flowers, blessed Cleis,
 whom I treasure more than the whole of Lydia or luscious Lesbos.

Poetry Contents Table

Πόλλα μοι τὰν
Πωλυανάκτιδα παῖδα χᾶιρην.

All joy comes to me, daughter of Polyanax.

Poetry Contents Table

Ζὰ δ' ἐλεξάμαν ὄναρ Κυπρογενήα.

I spoke to the Cyprian goddess in a dream.

Poetry Contents Table

Τί με Πανδίωνις ὦ ῥαννα χελίδων;

Why pretty swallow, Pandion's child, do you pester me?

Poetry Contents Table

Ἀμφὶ δ' ἄβροις λασίοις εὖ φε πύκασσεν.

She wrapped herself in gossamer clothes.

Poetry Contents Table

Γλύκεια μάτερ, οὔ τοι δύναμαι κρέκην τὸν ἴστον,
πόθῳ δάμεισα παῖδος βραδίναν δι' Ἀφρόδιταν.

My sweet mother, defeated by gentle Aphrodite's spell, longing for a
youth, I no longer weave the cloth.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἵψοι δὴ τὸ μέλαθρον,
 Ὑΰμῃναον
 ἀέρρετε τέκτονες ἄνδρες,
 Ὑΰμῃναον
 γάμβροσ ἔρχεται ἶσοσ Ἄΰρευϊ,
 [Ὑΰμῃναον]
 ἀνδροσ μεγάλο πόλυ μείζων
 [Ὑΰμῃναον]

Raise high the roof beams, workers! Hymenaeus! Like Ares, here
 comes the bridgroom! Hymenaeus! Taller than the tallest men!
 Hymenaeus!

Poetry Contents Table

Πέρροχος ὥς ὅτ' αἰδοσὶ Λέσβοις ἀλλοδάποισιν.

He towers like the lyrist of Lesbos above all men of other lands.

Poetry Contents Table

Οἶον τὸ γλυκύμαλον ἐρεύθεται ἄκρῳ ἐπ' ὕσδῳ
 ἄκρον ἐπ' ἀκροτάτῳ λελάθοντο δὲ μαλοδρόπνες,
 οὐ μὰν ἐκλελάθοντ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐδύναντ' ἐπίκεσθαι.

The sweet apple reddens on the branch, the very top branch, which
 the gatherers missed; no, they did not miss, but could not reach.

Poetry Contents Table

Οἷαν τὰν ὑάκινθον ἐν οὖρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες.
πόσσι καταστεῖβοισι, χαμαι δ' ἐπιπορφύρει ἄνθος.

On the hills the shepherds trample the flower underfoot and it lies on
the group, darkening in decay.

Poetry Contents Table

Φέσπερε, πάντα φέρων, ὅσα φαίνολιν ἐσκέδασ' αἶψα,
φέρεις οἶν, φέρεις αἶγα, φέρεις ἄπυ ματέρει παῖδα.

Evening, you bring all that light morning scattered, you herald the
sheep, the goat and restore the child to its mother.

Poetry Contents Table

Αἰπάρθενοσ ἔσσομαι.

I shall be a maid forever.

Poetry Contents Table

Δώσομεν, ἧσι πάτερ.

Let us give, says the father.

Poetry Contents Table

Θυρώρω πόδες ἐπτορόγυιοι
τὰ δὲ σάμβαλα πεμπεβόνα,
πίσυγγοι δὲ δέκ' ἐξεπόνασαν.

To the gate-keeper, seven feet long and sandals of five bull hides,
with work for ten cobblers.

Poetry Contents Table

Ὅλβιε γάμβρε, σοὶ μὲν δὴ γάμος, ὥς ἄραο
ἐκτετέλεστ' ἔχεις δὲ πάρθενον, ἅν ἄραο.

Happy bridegroom, now your wedding has come as you wished, and
you have your desired maiden.

Poetry Contents Table

Μελλίχιος δ' ἐπ' ἱμμέρτῳ κέχυται προσώποφ.

As a sweet expression steals across her beautiful face.

Poetry Contents Table

Ὁ μὲν γὰρ κάλος, ὅσον ἴδην, πέλεται [ἄγαθος]
ὁ δὲ κᾗγαθος αὐτικά καὶ κάλος ἔσσεται.

He who is beautiful to look on is good, and he who is good will soon be beautiful.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἦρ' ἔτι παρθενίας ἐπιβάλλομαι;

Do I still yearn for maidenhood...

Poetry Contents Table

Χαίροισα νύμφα, χαιρέτω δ' ὁ γάμβρος.

The bride enters rejoicing, let the bridegroom rejoice too.

Poetry Contents Table

Τίω, σ', ὦ φίλε γάμβρε, κάλωσ' εἰκάσω;
ὄρπακι βραδίνω σε κάλιστ' εἰκάσδω.

To what may I compare you, dear bridegroom?
Most like a tender shoot.

Poetry Contents Table

...Χαῖρε, νύμφα,
Χαῖρε, τίμιε γαμβε, πόλλα.

Hail bride, and hail all, noble bridegroom!

Poetry Contents Table

Οὐ γὰρ ἦν ἀτέρα παῖς, ὧ γάμβρε, τοαύτα.

O bridegroom, there is no other maiden like her.

Poetry Contents Table

Παρθενία, παρθενία, ποῖ με λίποις' ἀποίχῃ;
Οὐκέτι ἤξω πρὸς σέ, οὐκέτι ἤξω.

Maidenhood, maidenhood, why have you left me?
Never again shall I return to you.

Poetry Contents Table

Φαίνεται φοι κῆνος...

To himself he appears...

Poetry Contents Table

Ὡς πολὺ λευκότερον.

Something much whiter than an egg.

Poetry Contents Table

Μήτ' ἔμοι μέλι μήτε μέλισσα.

Neither honey nor bee...

Poetry Contents Table

Μὴ κίνη χέραδασ.

Do not disturb the pebbles.

Poetry Contents Table

Όπτιας ἄμμε.

You burn us.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἡμιτύβιον σταλάσσον.

A dripping cloth.

Poetry Contents Table

Τὸν γόν παιδα καλεῖ.

She called him her son.

Poetry Contents Table

Παιδες, ἄφωνος ἐοῖσα τόδ' ἐννέπω, αἵ τις ἔρνται,
 Φωνὰν ἀκαμάταν κατθέμενα πρὸ ποδῶν,
 Αἰθοπία με κόρα Λατοῦς ἀνέθηκεν Ἀρίστα
 Ἑρμοκλειδαία τῷ Σαοναϊάδα,
 σὰ πρόπολος, δέσποινα γυναικῶν, ἧ σὺ χαρεῖσα
 πρόφρων ἀμετέρον εἰκκλέϊσον γενεάν.

Maidens, though I am dumb, yet I speak thus. If any find and put at
 your feet someone with a constant voice. To Aethopia, daughter of
 Leto, I was consecrated by Arista, daughter of Hermokleides
 Saonaiades, your servant, queen of women. May you bless and
 glorify our house.

Poetry Contents Table

Τιμάδος ἄδε κόνισ, τὰν δὴ ρπὸ γάμοιο θανοῦσαν
 δέξατο φερσεφόνας κύανεος θάλαμος,
 ας καὶ ἐποφθιμένας πᾶσαι νεοθᾶγι σιδάρω
 ἄλικες ἱμερτὰν κρᾶτος ἔθεντο κόμαν.

Here is the dust of Timas, who was received in Persephone's dark chamber, ceased before her wedding; when she died all of her handmaidens sheared with sharpened metal their beautiful hair.

Poetry Contents Table

Ἄνθ' ἀμέργουσιν παῖδ' ἄγαν ἀπαλάν.

The gentlest maiden gathering flowers.

Poetry Contents Table

Πόλυ πάκιδος ἄδυμελεστέρα, χρύσω χρυσοτέρα.

The lyre, far sweeter in tone, sweeter than gold and more golden.

Poetry Contents Table

Ρ' ὀδοπτῆχαι καὶ ἐλικώπιδες καὶ καλλιπάρηοι
καὶ μελιχοφῶνοι.

With rose-touched cheeks and darting eyes and voices as sweet as
honey.

Poetry Contents Table

Ὑμμες πεδὰ Μοῖσαν ἰοκ[ό]λπων
 κάλα δῶρα, παῖδες,
 σπουδάσδετε καὶ τὰ]ν φιλαοιδον
 λιγύραν χελύνναν·
 ἔμοι δ' ἄπαλον πρίν] ποτ' [ἔ]οντα
 χροῖα γῆρας ἤδη
 ἐπέλλαβε, λεῦκαι δ' ἐγ]ένοντο
 τρίχες ἐκ μελαίναν·
 βάρυς δέ μ' ὁ [θ]ῦμος πεπόηται, γόνα
 δ' [ο]ὐ φέροισι,
 τὰ δὴ ποτα λαΐψηρ' ἔον ὄρχησθ' ἴσα
 νεβρίοισι.
 τὰ <μὲν> στεναχίσδω θαμέως· ἀλλὰ τί
 κεν ποεῖην;
 ἀγήραον ἄνθρωπον ἔοντ' οὐ δύνατον
 γένεσθαι
 καὶ γὰρ π[ο]τα Τίθωνον ἔφαντο
 βροδόπαχυν Αὔων
 ἔρωι φ . . αθρῖσαν βάμεν' εἰς
 ἔσχατα γᾶς φέροισα[ν,
 ἔοντα [κ]άλον καὶ νέον, ἀλλ'
 αὐτον ὕμῳ ἔμαρψε
 χρόνῳ πόλιον γῆρας, ἔχ[ο]
 γτ' ἀθανάταν ἄκοιτιν.

Be joyous, girls, for the fragrant-flowered Muses' lovely gifts, and
 for the clear harmonious lyre. But my once tender body is now seized
 by old age; my hair is white instead of dark; my heart has grown
 heavy; my knees will not hold me, though once they were as nimble
 for dancing as fawns.

How I often regret - but why complain? Never to grow old, when
 you are mortal, is impossible. A tale tells how Tithonus was once
 smitten by rose-armed Dawn, whom he carried off to the world's

end. He was handsome and young then, but eventually grey age overcame him, the husband of an immortal wife.

Poetry Contents Table

1907 TRANSLATION by Bliss Carman



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EPILOGUE



'Sappho and Alcaeus' by Lawrence Alma-Tadema

INTRODUCTION

THE POETRY OF SAPPHO. — If all the poets and all the lovers of poetry should be asked to name the most precious of the priceless things which time has wrung in tribute from the triumphs of human genius, the answer which would rush to every tongue would be “The Lost Poems of Sappho.” These we know to have been jewels of a radiance so imperishable that the broken gleams of them still dazzle men’s eyes, whether shining from the two small brilliants and the handful of star-dust which alone remain to us, or reflected merely from the adoration of those poets of old time who were so fortunate as to witness their full glory.

For about two thousand five hundred years Sappho has held her place as not only the supreme poet of her sex, but the chief lyrist of all lyrists. Every one who reads acknowledges her fame, concedes her supremacy; but to all except poets and Hellenists her name is a vague and uncomprehended splendour, rising secure above a persistent mist of misconception. In spite of all that is in these days being written about Sappho, it is perhaps not out of place now to inquire, in a few words, into the substance of this supremacy which towers so unassailably secure from what appear to be such shadowy foundations.

First, we have the witness of her contemporaries. Sappho was at the height of her career about six centuries before Christ, at a period when lyric poetry was peculiarly esteemed and cultivated at the centres of Greek life. Among the *Molic* peoples of the Isles, in particular, it had been carried to a high pitch of perfection, and its forms had become the subject of assiduous study. Its technique was exact, complex, extremely elaborate, minutely regulated; yet the essential fires of sincerity, spontaneity, imagination and passion were flaming with undiminished heat behind the fixed forms and restricted measures. The very metropolis of this lyric realm was Mitylene of Lesbos, where, amid the myrtle groves and temples, the sunlit silver of the fountains, the hyacinth gardens by a soft blue sea, Beauty and Love in their young warmth could fuse the most rigid forms to fluency. Here Sappho was the acknowledged queen of song —

revered, studied, imitated, served, adored by a little court of attendants and disciples, loved and hymned by Alcaeus, and acclaimed by her fellow craftsmen throughout Greece as the wonder of her age. That all the tributes of her contemporaries show reverence not less for her personality than for her genius is sufficient answer to the calumnies with which the ribald jesters of that later period, the corrupt and shameless writers of Athenian comedy, strove to defile her fame. It is sufficient, also, to warrant our regarding the picturesque but scarcely dignified story of her vain pursuit of Phaon and her frenzied leap from the Cliff of Leucas as nothing more than a poetic myth, reminiscent, perhaps, of the myth of Aphrodite and Adonis — who is, indeed, called Phaon in some versions. The story is further discredited by the fact that we find no mention of it in Greek literature — even among those Attic comedians who would have clutched at it so eagerly and given it so gross a turn — till a date more than two hundred years after Sappho's death. It is a myth which has begotten some exquisite literature, both in prose and verse, from Ovid's famous epistle to Addison's gracious fantasy and some impassioned and imperishable dithyrambs of Mr. Swinburne; but one need not accept the story as a fact in order to appreciate the beauties which flowered out from its coloured unreality.

The applause of contemporaries, however, is not always justified by the verdict of after-times, and does not always secure an immortality of renown. The fame of Sappho has a more stable basis. Her work was in the world's possession for not far short of a thousand years — a thousand years of changing tastes, searching criticism, and familiar use. It had to endure the wear and tear of quotation, the commonizing touch of the school and the marketplace. And under this test its glory grew ever more and more conspicuous. Through those thousand years poets and critics vied with one another in proclaiming her verse the one unmatched exemplar of lyric art. Such testimony, even though not a single fragment remained to us from which to judge her poetry for ourselves, might well convince us that the supremacy acknowledged by those who knew all the triumphs of the genius of old Greece was beyond the assault of any modern rival. We might safely accept the sustained judgment of a thousand years of Greece.

Fortunately for us, however, two small but incomparable odes and a few scintillating fragments have survived, quoted and handed down in the eulogies of critics and expositors. In these the wisest minds, the greatest poets, and the most inspired teachers of modern days have found justification for the unanimous verdict of antiquity. The tributes of Addison, Tennyson, and others, the throbbing paraphrases and ecstatic interpretations of Swinburne, are too well known to call for special comment in this brief note; but the concise summing up of her genius by Mr. Watts-Dunton in his remarkable essay on poetry is so convincing and illuminating that it seems to demand quotation here: "Never before these songs were sung, and never since did the human soul, in the grip of a fiery passion, utter a cry like hers; and, from the executive point of view, in directness, in lucidity, in that high, imperious verbal economy which only nature can teach the artist, she has no equal, and none worthy to take the place of second."

The poems of Sappho so mysteriously lost to us seem to have consisted of at least nine books of odes, together with *epithalamia*, epigrams, elegies, and monodies. Of the several theories which have been advanced to account for their disappearance, the most plausible seems to be that which represents them as having been burned at Byzantium in the year 380 Anno Domini, by command of Gregory Nazianzen, in order that his own poems might be studied in their stead and the morals of the people thereby improved. Of the efficacy of this act no means of judging has come down to us.

In recent years there has arisen a great body of literature upon the subject of Sappho, most of it the abstruse work of scholars writing for scholars. But the gist of it all, together with the minutest surviving fragment of her verse, has been made available to the general reader in English by Mr. Henry T. Wharton, in whose altogether admirable little volume we find all that is known and the most apposite of all that has been said up to the present day about

"Love's priestess, mad with pain and joy of song,
Song's priestess, mad with joy and pain of love."

Perhaps the most perilous and the most alluring venture in the

whole field of poetry is that which Mr. Carman has undertaken in attempting to give us in English verse those lost poems of Sappho of which fragments have survived. The task is obviously not one of translation or of paraphrasing, but of imaginative and, at the same time, interpretive construction. It is as if a sculptor of to-day were to set himself, with reverence, and trained craftsmanship, and studious familiarity with the spirit, technique, and atmosphere of his subject, to restore some statues of Polyclitus or Praxiteles of which he had but a broken arm, a foot, a knee, a finger upon which to build. Mr. Carman's method, apparently, has been to imagine each lost lyric as discovered, and then to translate it; for the indefinable flavour of the translation is maintained throughout, though accompanied by the fluidity and freedom of purely original work.

C.G.D. ROBERTS.

Now to please my little friend
I must make these notes of spring,
With the soft south-west wind in them
And the marsh notes of the frogs.

I must take a gold-bound pipe,
And outmatch the bubbling call
From the beechwoods in the sunlight,
From the meadows in the rain.

I

Cyprus, Paphos, or Panormus
May detain thee with their splendour
Of oblations on thine altars,
O imperial Aphrodite.

Yet do thou regard, with pity
For a nameless child of passion,
This small unfrequented valley
By the sea, O sea-born mother.

II

What shall we do, Cytherea?
Lovely Adonis is dying.
Ah, but we mourn him!

Will he return when the Autumn
Purples the earth, and the sunlight 5
Sleeps in the vineyard?

Will he return when the Winter
Huddles the sheep, and Orion
Goes to his hunting?

Ah, but thy beauty, Adonis, 10
With the soft spring and the south wind,
Love and desire!

III

Power and beauty and knowledge, —
Pan, Aphrodite, or Hermes, —
Whom shall we life-loving mortals
 Serve and be happy?

Lo now, your garlanded altars, 5
Are they not goodly with flowers?
Have ye not honour and pleasure
 In lovely Lesbos?

Will ye not, therefore, a little
Hearten, impel, and inspire 10
One who adores, with a favour
 Threefold in wonder?

IV

O Pan of the evergreen forest,
Protector of herds in the meadows,
Helper of men at their toiling, —
Tillage and harvest and herding, —
How many times to frail mortals 5
Hast thou not hearkened!

Now even I come before thee
With oil and honey and wheat-bread,
Praying for strength and fulfilment
Of human longing, with purpose 10
Ever to keep thy great worship
Pure and undarkened.

* * * * *

O Hermes, master of knowledge,
Measure and number and rhythm,
Worker of wonders in metal, 15
Moulder of malleable music,
So often the giver of secret
Learning to mortals!

Now even I, a fond woman,
Frail and of small understanding, 20
Yet with unslakable yearning
Greatly desiring wisdom,
Come to the threshold of reason
And the bright portals.

* * * * *

And thou, sea-born Aphrodite, 25
In whose beneficent keeping
Earth, with her infinite beauty,

Colour and fashion and fragrance,
Glow like a flower with fervour
Where woods are vernal! 30

Touch with thy lips and enkindle
This moon-white delicate body,
Drench with the dew of enchantment
This mortal one, that I also
Grow to the measure of beauty 35
Fleet yet eternal.

V

O Aphrodite,
 God-born and deathless,
 Break not my spirit
 With bitter anguish:
 Thou wilful empress, 5
 I pray thee, hither!

As once aforetime
 Well thou didst hearken
 To my voice far off, —
 Listen, and leaving 10
 Thy father's golden
 House in yoked chariot,

Come, thy fleet sparrows
 Beating the mid-air
 Over the dark earth. 15
 Suddenly near me,
 Smiling, immortal,
 Thy bright regard asked

What had befallen, —
 Why I had called thee, — 20
 What my mad heart then
 Most was desiring.
 "What fair thing wouldst thou
 Lure now to love thee?

"Who wrongs thee, Sappho? 25
 If now she flies thee,
 Soon shall she follow; —
 Scorning thy gifts now,
 Soon be the giver; —
 And a loth loved one 30

“Soon be the lover.”

So even now, too,

Come and release me

From mordant love pain,

And all my heart’s will 35

Help me accomplish!

VI

Peer of the gods he seems,
Who in thy presence
Sits and hears close to him
Thy silver speech-tones
And lovely laughter. 5

Ah, but the heart flutters
Under my bosom,
When I behold thee
Even a moment;
Utterance leaves me; 10

My tongue is useless;
A subtle fire
Runs through my body;
My eyes are sightless,
And my ears ringing; 15

I flush with fever,
And a strong trembling
Lays hold upon me;
Paler than grass am I,
Half dead for madness. 20

Yet must I, greatly
Daring, adore thee,
As the adventurous
Sailor makes seaward
For the lost sky-line 25

And undiscovered
Fabulous islands,
Drawn by the lure of
Beauty and summer

And the sea's secret. 30

VII

The Cyprian came to thy cradle,
When thou wast little and small,
And said to the nurse who rocked thee
“Fear not thou for the child:

“She shall be kindly favoured, 5
And fair and fashioned well,
As befits the Lesbian maidens
And those who are fated to love.”

Hermes came to thy cradle,
Resourceful, sagacious, serene, 10
And said, “The girl must have knowledge,
To lend her freedom and poise.

Naught will avail her beauty,
If she have not wit beside.
She shall be Hermes’ daughter, 15
Passing wise in her day.”

Great Pan came to thy cradle,
With calm of the deepest hills,
And smiled, “They have forgotten
The veriest power of life. 20

“To kindle her shapely beauty,
And illumine her mind withal,
I give to the little person
The glowing and craving soul.”

VIII

Aphrodite of the foam,
Who hast given all good gifts,
And made Sappho at thy will
Love so greatly and so much,

Ah, how comes it my frail heart 5
Is so fond of all things fair,
I can never choose between
Gorgo and Andromeda?

IX

Nay, but always and forever
Like the bending yellow grain,
Or quick water in a channel,
Is the heart of man.

Comes the unseen breath in power 5
Like a great wind from the sea,
And we bow before his coming,
Though we know not why.

X

Let there be garlands, Dica,
Around thy lovely hair.
And supple sprays of blossom
Twined by thy soft hands.

Whoso is crowned with flowers 5
Has favour with the gods,
Who have no kindly eyes
For the ungarlanded.

XI

When the Cretan maidens
Dancing up the full moon
Round some fair new altar,
Trample the soft blossoms of fine grass,

There is mirth among them. 5
Aphrodite's children
Ask her benediction
On their bridals in the summer night.

XII

In a dream I spoke with the Cyprus-born,
And said to her,
“Mother of beauty, mother of joy,
Why hast thou given to men

“This thing called love, like the ache of a wound 5
In beauty’s, side,
To burn and throb and be quelled for an hour
And never wholly depart?”

And the daughter of Cyprus said to me,
“Child of the earth, 10
Behold, all things are born and attain,
But only as they desire, —

“The sun that is strong, the gods that are wise,
The loving heart,
Deeds and knowledge and beauty and joy, — 15
But before all else was desire.”

XIII

Sleep thou in the bosom
Of the tender comrade,
While the living water
Whispers in the well-run,
And the oleanders 5
Glimmer in the moonlight.

Soon, ah, soon the shy birds
Will be at their fluting,
And the morning planet
Rise above the garden; 10
For there is a measure
Set to all things mortal.

XIV

Hesperus, bringing together
All that the morning star scattered, —

Sheep to be folded in twilight,
Children for mothers to fondle, —

Me too will bring to the dearest, 5
Tenderest breast in all Lesbos.

XV

In the grey olive-grove a small brown bird
Had built her nest and waited for the spring.
But who could tell the happy thought that came
To lodge beneath my scarlet tunic's fold?

All day long now is the green earth renewed
With the bright sea-wind and the yellow blossoms.
From the cool shade I hear the silver plash
Of the blown fountain at the garden's end.

XVI

In the apple boughs the coolness
Murmurs, and the grey leaves flicker
Where sleep wanders.

In this garden all the hot noon
I await thy fluttering footfall 5
Through the twilight.

XVII

Pale rose leaves have fallen
In the fountain water;
And soft reedy flute-notes
Pierce the sultry quiet.

But I wait and listen, 5
Till the trodden gravel
Tells me, all impatience,
It is Phaon's footstep.

XVIII

The courtyard of her house is wide
And cool and still when day departs.
Only the rustle of leaves is there
And running water.

And then her mouth, more delicate 5
Than the frail wood-anemone,
Brushes my cheek, and deeper grow
The purple shadows.

XIX

There is a medlar-tree
Growing in front of my lover's house,
And there all day
The wind makes a pleasant sound.

And when the evening comes, 5
We sit there together in the dusk,
And watch the stars
Appear in the quiet blue.

XX

I behold Arcturus going westward
Down the crowded slope of night-dark azure,
While the Scorpion with red Antares
Trails along the sea-line to the southward.

From the ilex grove there comes soft laughter, — 5
My companions at their glad love-making, —
While that curly-headed boy from Naxos
With his jade flute marks the purple quiet.

XXI

Softly the first step of twilight
Falls on the darkening dial,
One by one kindle the lights
In Mitylene.

Noises are hushed in the courtyard, 5
The busy day is departing,
Children are called from their games, —
Herds from their grazing.

And from the deep-shadowed angles
Comes the soft murmur of lovers, 10
Then through the quiet of dusk
Bright sudden laughter.

From the hushed street, through the portal,
Where soon my lover will enter,
Comes the pure strain of a flute 15
Tender with passion.

XXII

Once you lay upon my bosom,
While the long blue-silver moonlight
Walked the plain, with that pure passion
All your own.

Now the moon is gone, the Pleiads 5
Gone, the dead of night is going;
Slips the hour, and on my bed
I lie alone.

XXIII

I loved thee, Atthis, in the long ago,
When the great oleanders were in flower
In the broad herded meadows full of sun.
And we would often at the fall of dusk
Wander together by the silver stream, 5
When the soft grass-heads were all wet with dew,
And purple-misted in the fading light.
And joy I knew and sorrow at thy voice,
And the superb magnificence of love, —
The loneliness that saddens solitude, 10
And the sweet speech that makes it durable, —
The bitter longing and the keen desire,
The sweet companionship through quiet days
In the slow ample beauty of the world,
And the unutterable glad release 15
Within the temple of the holy night.
O Atthis, how I loved thee long ago
In that fair perished summer by the sea!

XXIV

I shall be ever maiden,
If thou be not my lover,
And no man shall possess me
Henceforth and forever.

But thou alone shalt gather 5
This fragile flower of beauty, —
To crush and keep the fragrance
Like a holy incense.

Thou only shalt remember
This love of mine, or hallow 10
The coming years with gladness,
Calm and pride and passion.

XXV

It was summer when I found you
In the meadow long ago, —
And the golden vetch was growing
By the shore.

Did we falter when love took us
With a gust of great desire?
Does the barley bid the wind wait
In his course?

XXVI

I recall thy white gown, cinctured
With a linen belt, whereon
Violets were wrought, and scented
With strange perfumes out of Egypt.

And I know thy foot was covered 5
With fair Lydian broidered straps;
And the petals from a rose-tree
Fell within the marble basin.

XXVII

Lover, art thou of a surety
Not a learner of the wood-god?
Has the madness of his music
 Never touched thee?

Ah, thou dear and godlike mortal, 5
If Pan takes thee for his pupil,
Make me but another Syrinx
 For that piping.

XXVIII

With your head thrown backward
In my arm's safe hollow,
And your face all rosy
With the mounting fervour;

While the grave eyes glisten 5
With the wise new wonder,
Swimming in a love-mist
Like the haze of Autumn;

From that throat, the throbbing
Nightingale's for pleading, 10
Wayward, soft, and welling
Inarticulate love-notes,

Come the words that bubble
Up through broken laughter,
Sweeter than spring-water, 15
"Gods, I am so happy!"

XXIX

Ah, what am I but a torrent,
Headstrong, impetuous, broken,
Like the spent clamour of waters
 In the blue canyon?

Ah, what art thou but a fern-frond, 5
Wet with blown spray from the river,
Diffident, lovely, sequestered,
 Frail on the rock-ledge?

Yet, are we not for one brief day,
While the sun sleeps on the mountain, 10
Wild-hearted lover and loved one,
 Safe in Pan's keeping?

XXX

Love shakes my soul, like a mountain wind
Falling upon the trees,
When they are swayed and whitened and bowed
As the great gusts will.

I know why Daphne sped through the grove 5
When the bright god came by,
And shut herself in the laurel's heart
For her silent doom.

Love fills my heart, like my lover's breath
Filling the hollow flute, 10
Till the magic wood awakes and cries
With remembrance and joy.

Ah, timid Syrinx, do I not know
Thy tremor of sweet fear?
For a beautiful and imperious player 15
Is the lord of life.

XXXI

Love, let the wind cry
On the dark mountain,
Bending the ash-trees
And the tall hemlocks,
With the great voice of 5
Thunderous legions,
How I adore thee.

Let the hoarse torrent
In the blue canyon,
Murmuring mightily 10
Out of the grey mist
Of primal chaos,
Cease not proclaiming
How I adore thee.

Let the long rhythm 15
Of crunching rollers,
Breaking and bellowing
On the white seaboard,
Titan and tireless,
Tell, while the world stands, 20
How I adore thee.

Love, let the clear call
Of the tree-cricket,
Frailest of creatures,
Green as the young grass, 25
Mark with his trilling
Resonant bell-note,
How I adore thee.

Let the glad lark-song
Over the meadow, 30

That melting lyric
Of molten silver,
Be for a signal
To listening mortals,
How I adore thee. 35

But more than all sounds,
Surer, serener,
Fuller with passion
And exultation,
Let the hushed whisper 40
In thine own heart say,
How I adore thee.

XXXII

Heart of mine, if all the altars
Of the ages stood before me,
Not one pure enough nor sacred
Could I find to lay this white, white
Rose of love upon. 5

I who am not great enough to
Love thee with this mortal body
So impassionate with ardour,
But oh, not too small to worship
While the sun shall shine, — 10

I would build a fragrant temple
To thee, in the dark green forest,
Of red cedar and fine sandal,
And there love thee with sweet service
All my whole life long. 15

I would freshen it with flowers,
And the piney hill-wind through it
Should be sweetened with soft fervours
Of small prayers in gentle language
Thou wouldst smile to hear. 20

And a tinkling Eastern wind-bell,
With its fluttering inscription,
From the rafters with bronze music
Should retard the quiet fleeting
Of uncounted hours. 25

And my hero, while so human,
Should be even as the gods are,
In that shrine of utter gladness,
With the tranquil stars above it

XXXIII

Never yet, love, in earth's lifetime,
Hath any cunningest minstrel
Told the one seventh of wisdom,
Ravishment, ecstasy, transport,
Hid in the hue of the hyacinth's 5
Purple in springtime.

Not in the lyre of Orpheus,
Not in the songs of Musaeus,
Lurked the unfathomed bewitchment
Wrought by the wind in the grasses, 10
Held by the rote of the sea-surf,
In early summer.

Only to exquisite lovers,
Fashioned for beauty's fulfilment,
Mated as rhythm to reed-stop 15
Whence the wild music is moulded,
Ever appears the full measure
Of the world's wonder.

XXXIV

“Who was Atthis?” men shall ask,
When the world is old, and time
Has accomplished without haste
The strange destiny of men.

Haply in that far-off age 5
One shall find these silver songs,
With their human freight, and guess
What a lover Sappho was.

XXXV

When the great pink mallow
Blossoms in the marshland,
Full of lazy summer
And soft hours,

Then I hear the summons 5
Not a mortal lover
Ever yet resisted,
Strange and far.

In the faint blue foothills,
Making magic music, 10
Pan is at his love-work
On the reeds.

I can guess the heart-stop,
Fall and lull and sequence,
Full of grief for Syrinx 15
Long ago.

Then the crowding madness,
Wild and keen and tender,
Trembles with the burden
Of great joy. 20

Nay, but well I follow,
All unskilled, that fluting.
Never yet was reed-nymph
Like to thee.

XXXVI

When I pass thy door at night
I a benediction breathe:
“Ye who have the sleeping world
In your care,

“Guard the linen sweet and cool, 5
Where a lovely golden head
With its dreams of mortal bliss
Slumbers now!”

XXXVII

Well I found you in the twilit garden,
Laid a lover's hand upon your shoulder,
And we both were made aware of loving
Past the reach of reason to unravel,
Or the much desiring heart to follow. 5

There we heard the breath among the grasses
And the gurgle of soft-running water,
Well contented with the spacious starlight,
The cool wind's touch and the deep blue distance,
Till the dawn came in with golden sandals. 10

XXXVIII

Will not men remember us
In the days to come hereafter, —
Thy warm-coloured loving beauty
And my love for thee?

Thou, the hyacinth that grows 5
By a quiet-running river;
I, the watery reflection
And the broken gleam.

XXXIX

I grow weary of the foreign cities,
The sea travel and the stranger peoples.
Even the clear voice of hardy fortune
Dares me not as once on brave adventure.

For the heart of man must seek and wander, 5
Ask and question and discover knowledge;
Yet above all goodly things is wisdom,
And love greater than all understanding.

So, a mariner, I long for land-fall, —
When a darker purple on the sea-rim, 10
O'er the prow uplifted, shall be Lesbos
And the gleaming towers of Mitylene.

XL

Ah, what detains thee, Phaon,
So long from Mitylene,
Where now thy restless lover
Wearies for thy coming?

A fever burns me, Phaon; 5
My knees quake on the threshold,
And all my strength is loosened,
Slack with disappointment.

But thou wilt come, my Phaon,
Back from the sea like morning, 10
To quench in golden gladness
The ache of parted lovers.

XLI

Phaon, O my lover,
What should so detain thee,

Now the wind comes walking
Through the leafy twilight?

All the plum-leaves quiver 5
With the coolth and darkness,

After their long patience
In consuming ardour.

And the moving grasses
Have relief; the dew-drench 10

Comes to quell the parching
Ache of noon they suffered.

I alone of all things
Fret with unsluiced fire.

And there is no quenching 15
In the night for Sappho,

Since her lover Phaon
Leaves her unrequited.

XLII

O heart of insatiable longing,
What spell, what enchantment allures thee
Over the rim of the world
With the sails of the sea-going ships?

And when the rose-petals are scattered 5
At dead of still noon on the grass-plot,
What means this passionate grief, —
This infinite ache of regret?

XLIII

Surely somehow, in some measure,
There will be joy and fulfilment, —
Cease from this throb of desire, —
Even for Sappho!

Surely some fortunate hour 5
Phaon will come, and his beauty
Be spent like water to plenish
Need of that beauty!

Where is the breath of Poseidon,
Cool from the sea-floor with evening? 10
Why are Selene's white horses
So long arriving?

XLIV

O but my delicate lover,
Is she not fair as the moonlight?
Is she not supple and strong
For hurried passion?

Has not the god of the green world, 5
In his large tolerant wisdom,
Filled with the ardours of earth
Her twenty summers?

Well did he make her for loving;
Well did he mould her for beauty; 10
Gave her the wish that is brave
With understanding.

“O Pan, avert from this maiden
Sorrow, misfortune, bereavement,
Harm, and unhappy regret,” 15
Prays one fond mortal.

XLV

Softer than the hill-fog to the forest
Are the loving hands of my dear lover,
When she sleeps beside me in the starlight
And her beauty drenches me with rest.

As the quiet mist enfolds the beech-trees, 5
Even as she dreams her arms enfold me,
Half awaking with a hundred kisses
On the scarlet lily of her mouth.

XLVI

I seek and desire,
Even as the wind
That travels the plain
And stirs in the bloom
Of the apple-tree. 5

I wander through life,
With the searching mind
That is never at rest,
Till I reach the shade
Of my lover's door. 10

XLVII

Like torn sea-kelp in the drift
Of the great tides of the sea,
Carried past the harbour-mouth
To the deep beyond return,

I am buoyed and borne away 5
On the loveliness of earth,
Little caring, save for thee,
Past the portals of the night.

XLVIII

Fine woven purple linen
I bring thee from Phocaea,
That, beauty upon beauty,
A precious gift may cover
The lap where I have lain. 5

And a gold comb, and girdle,
And trinkets of white silver,
And gems are in my sea-chest,
Lest poor and empty-handed
Thy lover should return. 10

And I have brought from Tyre
A Pan-flute stained vermillion,
Wherein the gods have hidden
Love and desire and longing,
Which I shall loose for thee. 15

XLIX

When I am home from travel,
My eager foot will stay not
Until I reach the threshold
Where I went forth from thee.

And there, as darkness gathers 5
In the rose-scented garden,
The god who prospers music
Shall give me skill to play.

And thou shalt hear, all startled,
A flute blown in the twilight, 10
With the soft pleading magic
The green wood heard of old.

Then, lamp in hand, thy beauty
In the rose-marble entry!
And unreluctant Hermes 15
Shall give me words to say.

L

When I behold the pharos shine
And lay a path along the sea,
How gladly I shall feel the spray,
Standing upon the swinging prow;

And question of my pilot old, 5
How many watery leagues to sail
Ere we shall round the harbour reef
And anchor off the wharves of home!

LI

Is the day long,
O Lesbian maiden,
And the night endless
In thy lone chamber
In Mitylene? 5

All the bright day,
Until welcome evening
When the stars kindle
Over the harbour,
What tasks employ thee? 10

Passing the fountain
At golden sundown,
One of the home-going
Traffickers, hast thou
Thought of thy lover? 15

Nay, but how far
Too brief will the night be,
When I returning
To the dear portal
Hear my own heart beat! 20

LII

Lo, on the distance a dark blue ravine,
A fold in the mountainous forests of fir,
Cleft from the sky-line sheer down to the shore!

Above are the clouds and the white, peeling gulls,
At its foot is the rough broken foam of the sea, 5
With ever anon the long deep muffled roar, —
A sigh from the fitful great heart of the world.

Then inland just where the small meadow begins,
Well bulwarked with boulders that jut in the tide,
Lies safe beyond storm-beat the harbour in sun. 10

See where the black fishing-boats, each at its buoy,
Ride up on the swell with their dare-danger prows,
To sight o'er the sea-rim what venture may come!

And look, where the narrow white streets of the town
Leap up from the blue water's edge to the wood, 15
Scant room for man's range between mountain and sea,
And the market where woodsmen from over the hill
May traffic, and sailors from far foreign ports
With treasure brought in from the ends of the earth.

And see the third house on the left, with that gleam 20
Of red burnished copper — the hinge of the door
Whereat I shall enter, expected so oft
(Let love be your sea-star!), to voyage no more.

LIII

Art thou the top-most apple
The gatherers could not reach,
Reddening on the bough?
Shall not I take thee?

Art thou a hyacinth blossom 5
The shepherds upon the hills
Have trodden into the ground?
Shall not I lift thee?

Free is the young god Eros,
Paying no tribute to power, 10
Seeing no evil in beauty,
Full of compassion.

Once having found the beloved,
However sorry or woeful,
However scornful of loving, 15
Little it matters.

LIV

How soon will all my lovely days be over,
And I no more be found beneath the sun, —
Neither beside the many-murmuring sea,
Nor where the plain-winds whisper to the reeds,
Nor in the tall beech-woods among the hills 5
Where roam the bright-lipped Oreads, nor along
The pasture-sides where berry-pickers stray
And harmless shepherds pipe their sheep to fold!

For I am eager, and the flame of life
Burns quickly in the fragile lamp of clay. 10
Passion and love and longing and hot tears
Consume this mortal Sappho, and too soon
A great wind from the dark will blow upon me,
And I be no more found in the fair world,
For all the search of the revolving moon 15
And patient shine of everlasting stars.

LV

Soul of sorrow, why this weeping?
What immortal grief hath touched thee
With the poignancy of sadness, —
 Testament of tears?

Have the high gods deigned to show thee 5
Destiny, and disillusion
Fills thy heart at all things human,
 Fleeting and desired?

Nay, the gods themselves are fettered
By one law which links together 10
Truth and nobleness and beauty,
 Man and stars and sea.

And they only shall find freedom
Who with courage rise and follow
Where love leads beyond all peril, 15
 Wise beyond all words.

LVI

It never can be mine
To sit in the door in the sun
And watch the world go by,
A pageant and a dream;

For I was born for love, 5
And fashioned for desire,
Beauty, passion, and joy,
And sorrow and unrest;

And with all things of earth
Eternally must go, 10
Daring the perilous bourn
Of joyance and of death,

A strain of song by night,
A shadow on the hill,
A hint of odorous grass, 15
A murmur of the sea.

LVII

Others shall behold the sun
Through the long uncounted years, —
Not a maid in after time
Wise as thou!

For the gods have given thee
Their best gift, an equal mind 5
That can only love, be glad,
And fear not.

LVIII

Let thy strong spirit never fear,
Nor in thy virgin soul be thou afraid.
The gods themselves and the almightier fates
Cannot avail to harm

With outward and misfortunate chance 5
The radiant unshaken mind of him
Who at his being's centre will abide,
Secure from doubt and fear.

His wise and patient heart shall share
The strong sweet loveliness of all things made, 10
And the serenity of inward joy
Beyond the storm of tears.

LIX

Will none say of Sappho,
Speaking of her lovers,
And the love they gave her, —
Joy and days and beauty,
Flute-playing and roses, 5
Song and wine and laughter, —

Will none, musing, murmur,
“Yet, for all the roses,
All the flutes and lovers,
Doubt not she was lonely 10
As the sea, whose cadence
Haunts the world for ever.”

LX

When I have departed,
Say but this behind me,
“Love was all her wisdom,
All her care.

“Well she kept love’s secret, — 5
Dared and never faltered, —
Laughed and never doubted
Love would win.

“Let the world’s rough triumph
Trample by above her, 10
She is safe forever
From all harm.

“In a land that knows not
Bitterness nor sorrow,
She has found out all 15
Of truth at last.”

LXI

There is no more to say now thou art still,
There is no more to do now thou art dead,
There is no more to know now thy clear mind
Is back returned unto the gods who gave it.

Now thou art gone the use of life is past, 5
The meaning and the glory and the pride,
There is no joyous friend to share the day,
And on the threshold no awaited shadow.

LXII

Play up, play up thy silver flute;
The crickets all are brave;
Glad is the red autumnal earth
And the blue sea.

Play up thy flawless silver flute; 5
Dead ripe are fruit and grain.
When love puts on his scarlet coat,
Put off thy care.

LXIII

A beautiful child is mine,
Formed like a golden flower,
Cleis the loved one.
And above her I value
Not all the Lydian land, 5
Nor lovely Hellas.

LXIV

Ah, but now henceforth
Only one meaning
Has life for me.

Only one purport,
Measure and beauty, 5
Has the bright world.

What mean the wood-winds,
Colour and morning,
Bird, stream, and hill?

And the brave city 10
With its enchantment?
Thee, only thee!

LXV

Softly the wind moves through the radiant morning,
And the warm sunlight sinks into the valley,
Filling the green earth with a quiet joyance,
Strength, and fulfilment.

Even so, gentle, strong and wise and happy, 5
Through the soul and substance of my being,
Comes the breath of thy great love to me-ward,
O thou dear mortal.

LXVI

What the west wind whispers
At the end of summer,
When the barley harvest
Ripens to the sickle,
Who can tell? 5

What means the fine music
Of the dry cicada,
Through the long noon hours
Of the autumn stillness,
Who can say? 10

How the grape ungathered
With its bloom of blueness
Greatens on the trellis
Of the brick-walled garden,
Who can know? 15

Yet I, too, am greatened,
Keep the note of gladness,
Travel by the wind's road,
Through this autumn leisure, —
By thy love. 20

LXVII

Indoors the fire is kindled;
Beechwood is piled on the hearthstone;
Cold are the chattering oak-leaves;
And the ponds frost-bitten.

Softer than rainfall at twilight, 5
Bringing the fields benediction
And the hills quiet and greyness,
Are my long thoughts of thee.

How should thy friend fear the seasons?
They only perish of winter 10
Whom Love, audacious and tender,
Never hath visited.

LXVIII

You ask how love can keep the mortal soul
Strong to the pitch of joy throughout the years.

Ask how your brave cicada on the bough
Keeps the long sweet insistence of his cry;

Ask how the Pleiads steer across the night 5
In their serene unswerving mighty course;

Ask how the wood-flowers waken to the sun,
Unsummoned save by some mysterious word;

Ask how the wandering swallows find your eaves
Upon the rain-wind with returning spring; 10

Ask who commands the ever-punctual tide
To keep the pendulous rhythm of the sea;

And you shall know what leads the heart of man
To the far haven of his hopes and fears.

LXIX

Like a tall forest were their spears,
Their banners like a silken sea,
When the great host in splendour passed
Across the crimson sinking sun.

And then the bray of brazen horns 5
Arose above their clanking march,
As the long waving column filed
Into the odorous purple dusk.

O lover, in this radiant world
Whence is the race of mortal men, 10
So frail, so mighty, and so fond,
That fleets into the vast unknown?

LXX

My lover smiled, "O friend, ask not
The journey's end, nor whence we are.
That whistling boy who minds his goats
So idly in the grey ravine,

"The brown-backed rower drenched with spray, 5
The lemon-seller in the street,
And the young girl who keeps her first
Wild love-tryst at the rising moon, —

"Lo, these are wiser than the wise.
And not for all our questioning 10
Shall we discover more than joy,
Nor find a better thing than love!

"Let pass the banners and the spears,
The hate, the battle, and the greed;
For greater than all gifts is peace, 15
And strength is in the tranquil mind."

LXXI

Ye who have the stable world
In the keeping of your hands.
Flocks and men, the lasting hills,
And the ever-wheeling stars;

Ye who freight with wondrous things 5
The wide-wandering heart of man
And the galleon of the moon,
On those silent seas of foam;

Oh, if ever ye shall grant
Time and place and room enough 10
To this fond and fragile heart
Stifled with the throb of love,

On that day one grave-eyed Fate,
Pausing in her toil, shall say,
“Lo, one mortal has achieved 15
Immortality of love!”

LXXII

I heard the gods reply:

“Trust not the future with its perilous chance;
The fortunate hour is on the dial now.

“To-day be wise and great,
And put off hesitation and go forth 5
With cheerful courage for the diurnal need.

“Stout be the heart, nor slow
The foot to follow the impetuous will,
Nor the hand slack upon the loom of deeds.

“Then may the Fates look up 10
And smile a little in their tolerant way,
Being full of infinite regard for men.”

LXXIII

The sun on the tide, the peach on the bough,
The blue smoke over the hill,
And the shadows trailing the valley-side,
Make up the autumn day.

Ah, no, not half! Thou art not here 5
Under the bronze beech-leaves,
And thy lover's soul like a lonely child
Roams through an empty room.

LXXIV

If death be good,
Why do the gods not die?
If life be ill,
Why do the gods still live?

If love be naught, 5
Why do the gods still love?
If love be all,
What should men do but love?

LXXV

Tell me what this life means,
O my prince and lover,
With the autumn sunlight
On thy bronze-gold head?

With thy clear voice sounding 5
Through the silver twilight, —
What is the lost secret
Of the tacit earth?

LXXVI

Ye have heard how Marsyas,
In the folly of his pride,
Boasted of a matchless skill, —
When the great god's back was turned;

How his fond imagining 5
Fell to ashes cold and grey,
When the flawless player came
In serenity and light.

So it was with those I loved
In the years ere I loved thee. 10
Many a saying sounds like truth,
Until Truth itself is heard.

Many a beauty only lives
Until Beauty passes by,
And the mortal is forgot 15
In the shadow of the god.

LXXVII

Hour by hour I sit,
Watching the silent door.
Shadows go by on the wall,
And steps in the street.

Expectation and doubt s
Flutter my timorous heart.
So many hurrying home —
And thou still away.

LXXVIII

Once in the shining street,
In the heart of a seaboard town,
As I waited, behold, there came
The woman I loved.

As when, in the early spring, 5
A daffodil blooms in the grass,
Golden and gracious and glad,
The solitude smiled.

LXXIX

How strange is love, O my lover!
With what enchantment and power
Does it not come upon mortals,
Learned or heedless!

How far away and unreal, 5
Faint as blue isles in a sunset
Haze-golden, all else of life seems,
Since I have known thee!

LXXX

How to say I love you:
What, if I but live it,
Were the use in that, love?
 Small, indeed.

Only, every moment 5
Of this waking lifetime
Let me be your lover
 And your friend!

Ah, but then, as sure as
Blossom breaks from bud-sheath, 10
When along the hillside
 Spring returns,

Golden speech should flower
From the soul so cherished,
And the mouth your kisses 15
 Filled with fire.

LXXXI

Hark, love, to the tambourines
Of the minstrels in the street,
And one voice that throbs and soars
Clear above the clashing time!

Some Egyptian royal love-lilt, 5
Some Sidonian refrain,
Vows of Paphos or of Tyre,
Mount against the silver sun.

Pleading, piercing, yet serene,
Vagrant in a foreign town, 10
From what passion was it born,
In what lost land over sea?

LXXXII

Over the roofs the honey-coloured moon,
With purple shadows on the silver grass,

And the warm south-wind on the curving sea,
While we two, lovers past all turmoil now,

Watch from the window the white sails come in, 5
Bearing what unknown ventures safe to port!

So falls the hour of twilight and of love
With wizardry to loose the hearts of men,

And there is nothing more in this great world
Than thou and I, and the blue dome of dusk. 10

LXXXIII

In the quiet garden world,
Gold sunlight and shadow leaves
Flicker on the wall.

And the wind, a moment since,
With rose-petals strewed the path 5
And the open door.

Now the moon-white butterflies
Float across the liquid air,
Glad as in a dream;

And, across thy lover's heart, 10
Visions of one scarlet mouth
With its maddening smile.

LXXXIV

Soft was the wind in the beech-trees;
Low was the surf on the shore;
In the blue dusk one planet
Like a great sea-pharos shone.

But nothing to me were the sea-sounds, 5
The wind and the yellow star,
When over my breast the banner
Of your golden hair was spread.

LXXXV

Have you heard the news of Sappho's garden,
And the Golden Rose of Mitylene,
Which the bending brown-armed rowers lately
Brought from over sea, from lonely Pontus?

In a meadow by the river Halys, 5
Where some wood-god hath the world in keeping,
On a burning summer noon they found her,
Lovely as a Dryad, and more tender.

Her these eyes have seen, and not another
Shall behold, till time takes all things goodly, 10
So surpassing fair and fond and wondrous, —
Such a slave as, worth a great king's ransom,

No man yet of all the sons of mortals
But would lose his soul for and regret not;
So hath Beauty compassed all her children 15
With the cords of longing and desire.

Only Hermes, master of word music,
Ever yet in glory of gold language
Could ensphere the magical remembrance
Of her melting, half sad, wayward beauty, 20

Or devise the silver phrase to frame her,
The inevitable name to call her,
Half a sigh and half a kiss when whispered,
Like pure air that feeds a forge's hunger.

Not a painter in the Isles of Hellas 25
Could portray her, mix the golden tawny
With bright stain of poppies, or ensanguine
Like the life her darling mouth's vermilion,

So that, in the ages long hereafter,
When we shall be dust of perished summers, 30
Any man could say who found that likeness,
Smiling gently on it, "This was Gorgo!"

LXXXVI

Love is so strong a thing,
The very gods must yield,
When it is welded fast
With the unflinching truth.

Love is so frail a thing, 5
A word, a look, will kill.
Oh lovers, have a care
How ye do deal with love.

LXXXVII

Hadst thou, with all thy loveliness, been true,
Had I, with all my tenderness, been strong,
We had not made this ruin out of life,
This desolation in a world of joy,
My poor Gorgo. 5

Yet even the high gods at times do err;
Be therefore thou not overcome with woe,
But dedicate anew to greater love
An equal heart, and be thy radiant self
Once more, Gorgo. 10

LXXXVIII

As, on a morn, a traveller might emerge
From the deep green seclusion of the hills,
By a cool road through forest and through fern,
Little frequented, winding, followed long
With joyous expectation and day-dreams, 5
And on a sudden, turning a great rock
Covered with frondage, dark with dripping water,
Behold the seaboard full of surf and sound,
With all the space and glory of the world
Above the burnished silver of the sea, — 10

Even so it was upon that first spring day
When time, that is a devious path for men,
Led me all lonely to thy door at last;
And all thy splendid beauty, gracious and glad,
(Glad as bright colour, free as wind or air, 15
And lovelier than racing seas of foam)
Bore sense and soul and mind at once away
To a pure region where the gods might dwell,
Making of me, a vagrant child before,
A servant of joy at Aphrodite's will. 20

LXXXIX

Where shall I look for thee,
Where find thee now,
O my lost Atthis?

Storm bars the harbour,
And snow keeps the pass 5
In the blue mountains.

Bitter the wind whistles,
Pale is the sun,
And the days shorten.

Close to the hearthstone, 10
With long thoughts of thee,
Thy lonely lover

Sits now, remembering
All the spent hours
And thy fair beauty. 15

Ah, when the hyacinth
Wakens with spring,
And buds the laurel,

Doubt not, some morning
When all earth revives, 20
Hearing Pan's flute-call

Over the river-beds,
Over the hills,
Sounding the summons,

I shall look up and behold 25
In the door,
Smiling, expectant,

Loving as ever
And glad as of old,
My own lost Atthis! 30

XC

A sad, sad face, and saddest eyes that ever
Beheld the sun,
Whence came the grief that makes of all thy beauty
One sad sweet smile?

In this bright portrait, where the painter fixed them, 5
I still behold
The eyes that gladdened, and the lips that loved me,
And, gold on rose,

The cloud of hair that settles on one shoulder
Slipped from its vest. 10
I almost hear thy Mitylenean love-song
In the spring night,

When the still air was odorous with blossoms,
And in the hour
Thy first wild girl's-love trembled into being, 15
Glad, glad and fond.

Ah, where is all that wonder? What god's malice
Undid that joy
And set the seal of patient woe upon thee,
O my lost love? 20

XCI

Why have the gods in derision
Severed us, heart of my being?
Where have they lured thee to wander,
O my lost lover?

While now I sojourn with sorrow, 5
Having remorse for my comrade,
What town is blessed with thy beauty,
Gladdened and prospered?

Nay, who could love as I loved thee,
With whom thy beauty was mingled 10
In those spring days when the swallows
Came with the south wind?

Then I became as that shepherd
Loved by Selene on Latmus,
Once when her own summer magic 15
Took hold upon her

With a sweet madness, and thenceforth
Her mortal lover must wander
Over the wide world for ever,
Like one enchanted. 20

XCII

Like a red lily in the meadow grasses,
Swayed by the wind and burning in the sunlight,
I saw you, where the city chokes with traffic,
Bearing among the passers-by your beauty,
Unsullied, wild, and delicate as a flower. 5
And then I knew, past doubt or peradventure,
Our loved and mighty Eleusinian mother
Had taken thought of me for her pure worship,
And of her favour had assigned my comrade
For the Great Mysteries, — knew I should find you 10
When the dusk murmured with its new-made lovers,
And we be no more foolish but wise children,
And well content partake of joy together,
As she ordains and human hearts desire.

XCIII

When in the spring the swallows all return,
And the bleak bitter sea grows mild once more,
With all its thunders softened to a sigh;

When to the meadows the young green comes back,
And swelling buds put forth on every bough, 5
With wild-wood odours on the delicate air;

Ah, then, in that so lovely earth wilt thou
With all thy beauty love me all one way,
And make me all thy lover as before?

Lo, where the white-maned horses of the surge, 10
Plunging in thunderous onset to the shore,
Trample and break and charge along the sand!

XCIV

Cold is the wind where Daphne sleeps,
That was so tender and so warm
With loving, — with a loveliness
Than her own laurel lovelier.

Now pipes the bitter wind for her, 5
And the snow sifts about her door,
While far below her frosty hill
The racing billows plunge and boom.

XCV

Hark, where Poseidon's
White racing horses
Trample with tumult
The shelving seaboard!

Older than Saturn, 5
Older than Rhea,
That mournful music,
Falling and surging

With the vast rhythm
Ceaseless, eternal, 10
Keeps the long tally
Of all things mortal.

How many lovers
Hath not its lulling
Cradled to slumber
With the ripe flowers, 15

Ere for our pleasure
This golden summer
Walked through the corn-lands
In gracious splendour! 20

How many loved ones
Will it not croon to,
In the long spring-days
Through coming ages,

When all our day-dreams 25
Have been forgotten,
And none remembers
Even thy beauty!

They too shall slumber
In quiet places, 30
And mighty sea-sounds
Call them unheeded.

XCVI

Hark, my lover, it is spring!
On the wind a faint far call
Wakes a pang within my heart,
Unmistakable and keen.

At the harbour mouth a sail 5
Glimmers in the morning sun,
And the ripples at her prow
Whiten into crumbling foam,

As she forges outward bound
For the teeming foreign ports. 10
Through the open window now,
Hear the sailors lift a song!

In the meadow ground the frogs
With their deafening flutes begin, —
The old madness of the world 15
In their golden throats again.

Little fifers of live bronze,
Who hath taught you with wise lore
To unloose the strains of joy,
When Orion seeks the west? 20

And you feathered flute-players,
Who instructed you to fill
All the blossomy orchards now
With melodious desire?

I doubt not our father Pan 25
Hath a care of all these things.
In some valley of the hills
Far away and misty-blue,

By quick water he hath cut
A new pipe, and set the wood 30
To his smiling lips, and blown,
That earth's rapture be restored.

And those wild Pandean stops
Mark the cadence life must keep.
O my lover, be thou glad; 35
It is spring in Hellas now.

XCVII

When the early soft spring wind comes blowing
Over Rhodes and Samos and Miletus,
From the seven mouths of Nile to Lesbos,
Freighted with sea-odours and gold sunshine,

What news spreads among the island people 5
In the market-place of Mitylene,
Lending that unwonted stir of gladness
To the busy streets and thronging doorways?

Is it word from Ninus or Arbela,
Babylon the great, or Northern Imbros? 10
Have the laden galleons been sighted
Stoutly labouring up the sea from Tyre?

Nay, 'tis older news that foreign sailor
With the cheek of sea-tan stops to prattle
To the young fig-seller with her basket 15
And the breasts that bud beneath her tunic,

And I hear it in the rustling tree-tops.
All this passionate bright tender body
Quivers like a leaf the wind has shaken,
Now love wanders through the aisles of springtime. 20

XCVIII

I am more tremulous than shaken reeds,
And love has made me like the river water.

Thy voice is as the hill-wind over me,
And all my changing heart gives heed, my lover.

Before thy least lost murmur I must sigh, 5
Or gladden with thee as the sun-path glitters.

XCIX

Over the wheat-field,
Over the hill-crest,
Swoops and is gone
The beat of a wild wing,
Brushing the pine-tops, 5
Bending the poppies,
Hurrying Northward
With golden summer.

What premonition,
O purple swallow, 10
Told thee the happy
Hour of migration?
Hark! On the threshold
(Hush, flurried heart in me!),
Was there a footfall? 15
Did no one enter?

Soon will a shepherd
In rugged Dacia,
Folding his gentle
Ewes in the twilight, 20
Lifting a level
Gaze from the sheepfold,
Say to his fellows,
“Lo, it is springtime.”

This very hour 25
In Mitylene,
Will not a young girl
Say to her lover,
Lifting her moon-white
Arms to enlace him, 30
Ere the glad sigh comes,

“Lo, it is lovetime!”

C

Once more the rain on the mountain,
Once more the wind in the valley,
With the soft odours of springtime
And the long breath of remembrance,
O Lityerses! 5

Warm is the sun in the city.
On the street corners with laughter
Traffic the flower-girls. Beauty
Blossoms once more for thy pleasure
In many places. 10

Gentlier now falls the twilight,
With the slim moon in the pear-trees;
And the green frogs in the meadows
Blow on shrill pipes to awaken
Thee, Lityerses. 15

Gladlier now crimson morning
Flushes fair-built Mitylene, —
Portico, temple, and column, —
Where the young garlanded women
Praise thee with singing. 20

Ah, but what burden of sorrow
Tinges their slow stately chorus,
Though spring revisits the glad earth?
Wilt thou not wake to their summons,
O Lityerses? 25

Shall they then never behold thee, —
Nevermore see thee returning
Down the blue cleft of the mountains,
Nor in the purple of evening

Welcome thy coming? 30

Nevermore answer thy glowing
Youth with their ardour, nor cherish
With lovely longing thy spirit,
Nor with soft laughter beguile thee,
O Lityerses? 35

Heedless, assuaged, art thou sleeping
Where the spring sun cannot find thee,
Nor the wind waken, nor woodlands
Bloom for thy innocent rapture
Through golden hours? 40

Hast thou no passion nor pity
For thy deserted companions?
Never again will thy beauty
Quell their desire nor rekindle,
O Lityerses? 45

Nay, but in vain their clear voices
Call thee. Thy sensitive beauty
Is become part of the fleeting
Loveliness, merged in the pathos
Of all things mortal. 50

In the faint fragrance of flowers,
On the sweet draft of the sea-wind,
Linger strange hints now that loosen
Tears for thy gay gentle spirit,
O Lityerses! 55

EPILOGUE

Now the hundred songs are made,
And the pause comes. Loving Heart,
There must be an end to summer,
And the flute be laid aside.

On a day the frost will come, 5
Walking through the autumn world,
Hushing all the brave endeavour
Of the crickets in the grass.

On a day (Oh, far from now!)
Earth will hear this voice no more; 10
For it shall be with thy lover
As with Linus long ago.

All the happy songs he wrought
From remembrance soon must fade,
As the wash of silver moonlight 15
From a purple-dark ravine.

Frail as dew upon the grass
Or the spindrift of the sea,
Out of nothing they were fashioned
And to nothing must return. 20

Nay, but something of thy love,
Passion, tenderness, and joy,
Some strange magic of thy beauty,
Some sweet pathos of thy tears,

Must imperishably cling 25
To the cadence of the words,
Like a spell of lost enchantments
Laid upon the hearts of men.

Wild and fleeting as the notes
Blown upon a woodland pipe, 30
They must haunt the earth with gladness
And a tinge of old regret.

For the transport in their rhythm
Was the throb of thy desire,
And thy lyric moods shall quicken 35
Souls of lovers yet unborn.

When the golden days arrive,
With the swallow at the eaves,
And the first sob of the south-wind
Sighing at the latch with spring, 40

Long hereafter shall thy name
Be recalled through foreign lands,
And thou be a part of sorrow
When the Linus songs are sung.

1910 TRANSLATION by John Myers O'Hara



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PELAGON

Who shall strike the wax of mystery from those priceless amphoræ, and give to the unsophisticated nostrils of the average reader the ravishing bouquet of wine pressed in a garden in Mitylene, twenty-five centuries ago? — MAURICE THOMPSON.

*Then to me so lying awake a vision
Came without sleep over the seas and touched me,
Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I, too,
Full of the vision,*

*Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,
Saw the hair unbound and the feet unsandalled
Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;
Saw the reluctant*

*Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her,
Looking always, looking with necks reverted
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder
Shone Mitylene.*

— SWINBURNE.

Ω θεοί, πῶς ἄρα Κύπρις, ἥ τίς μέρος
τοῦδε ξυνήψατο

— SOPHOCLES.

SAPPHICS

THE MUSES

Hither now, O Muses, leaving the golden
House of God unseen in the azure spaces,
Come and breathe on bosom and brow and kindle
Song like the sunglow;

Come and lift my shaken soul to the sacred
Shadow cast by Helicon's rustling forests;
Sweep on wings of flame from the middle ether,
Seize and uplift me;

Thrill my heart that throbs with unwonted fervor,
Chasten mouth and throat with immortal kisses,
Till I yield on maddening heights the very
Breath of my body.

MUSAGETES

Come with Musagetes, ye Hours and Graces,
Dance around the team of swans that attend him
Up Parnassian heights, to his holy temple
High on the hill-top;

Come, ye Muses, too, from the shades of Pindus,
Let your songs, that echo on winds of rapture,
Wake the lyre he tunes to the sweet inspiring
Sound of your voices.

LOVE'S BANQUET

If Panormus, Cyprus or Paphos hold thee,
Either home of Gods or the island temple,
Hark again and come at my invocation,
Goddess benefic;

Come thou, foam-born Kypris, and pour in dainty
Cups of amber gold thy delicate nectar,
Subtly mixed with fire that will swiftly kindle
Love in our bosoms;

Thus the bowl ambrosial was stirred in Paphos
For the feast, and taking the burnished ladle,
Hermes poured the wine for the Gods who lifted
Reverent beakers;

High they held their goblets and made libation,
Spilling wine as pledge to the Fates and Hades
Quaffing deep and binding their hearts to Eros,
Lauding thy servant.

So to me and my Lesbians round me gathered,
Each made mine, an amphor of love long tasted,
Bid us drink, who sigh for thy thrill ecstatic,
Passion's full goblet;

Grant me this, O Kypris, and on thy altar
Dawn will see a goat of the breed of Naxos,
Snowy doves from Cos and the drip of rarest
Lesbian vintage;

For a regal taste is mine and the glowing
Zenith-lure and beauty of suns must brighten
Love for me, that ever upon perfection
Trembles elusive.

MOON AND STARS

When the moon at full on the sill of heaven
Lights her beacon, flooding the earth with silver,
All the shining stars that about her cluster
Hide their fair faces;

So when Anactoria's beauty dazzles
Sight of mine, grown dim with the joy it gives me,
Gorgo, Atthis, Gyrinno, all the others
Fade from my vision.

ODE TO ANACTORIA

Peer of Gods to me is the man thy presence
Crowns with joy; who hears, as he sits beside thee,
Accents sweet of thy lips the silence breaking,
With lovely laughter;

Tones that make the heart in my bosom flutter,
For if I, the space of a moment even,
Near to thee come, any word I would utter
Instantly fails me;

Vain my stricken tongue would a whisper fashion,
Subtly under my skin runs fire ecstatic;
Straightway mists surge dim to my eyes and leave them
Reft of their vision;

Echoes ring in my ears; a trembling seizes
All my body bathed in soft perspiration;
Pale as grass I grow in my passion's madness,
Like one insensate;

But must I dare all, since to me unworthy,
Bliss thy beauty brings that a God might envy;
Never yet was fervid woman a fairer
Image of Kypris.

Ah! undying Daughter of God, befriend me!
Calm my blood that thrills with impending transport;
Feed my lips the murmur of words to stir her
Bosom to pity;

Overcome with kisses her faintest protest,
Melt her mood to mine with amorous touches,
Till her low assent and her sigh's abandon
Lure me to rapture.

THE ROSE

If it pleased the whim of Zeus in an idle
Hour to choose a king for the flowers, he surely
Would have crowned the rose for its regal beauty,
Deeming it peerless;

By its grace is valley and hill embellished,
Earth is made a shrine for the lover's ardor;
Dear it is to flowers as the charm of lovely
Eyes are to mortals;

Joy and pride of plants, and the garden's glory,
Beauty's blush it brings to the cheek of meadows;
Draining fire and dew from the dawn for rarest
Color and odor;

Softly breathed, its scent is a plea for passion,
When it blooms to welcome the kiss of Kypris;
Sheathed in fragrant leaves its tremulous petals
Laugh in the zephyr.

ODE TO APHRODITE

Aphrodite, subtle of soul and deathless,
Daughter of God, weaver of wiles, I pray thee
Neither with care, dread Mistress, nor with anguish,
Slay thou my spirit!

But in pity hasten, come now if ever
From afar of old when my voice implored thee,
Thou hast deigned to listen, leaving the golden
House of thy father

With thy chariot yoked; and with doves that drew thee,
Fair and fleet around the dark earth from heaven,
Dipping vibrant wings down the azure distance,
Through the mid-ether;

Very swift they came; and thou, gracious Vision,
Leaned with face that smiled in immortal beauty,
Leaned to me and asked, "What misfortune threatened?
Why I had called thee?"

"What my frenzied heart craved in utter yearning,
Whom its wild desire would persuade to passion?
What disdainful charms, madly worshipped, slight thee?
Who wrongs thee, Sappho?"

"She that fain would fly, she shall quickly follow,
She that now rejects, yet with gifts shall woo thee,
She that heeds thee not, soon shall love to madness,
Love thee, the loth one!"

Come to me now thus, Goddess, and release me
From distress and pain; and all my distracted
Heart would seek, do thou, once again fulfilling,
Still be my ally!

SUMMER

Slumber streams from quivering leaves that listless
Bask in heat and stillness of Lesbian summer;
Breathless swoons the air with the apple-blossoms'
Delicate odor;

From the shade of branches that droop and cover
Shallow trenches winding about the orchard,
Restful comes, and cool to the sense, the flowing
Murmur of water.

THE GARDEN OF THE NYMPHS

All around through the apple boughs in blossom
Murmur cool the breezes of early summer,
And from leaves that quiver above me gently
Slumber is shaken;

Glades of poppies swoon in the drowsy languor,
Dreaming roses bend, and the oleanders
Bask and nod to drone of bees in the silent
Fervor of noontide;

Myrtle coverts hedging the open vista,
Dear to nightly frolic of Nymph and Satyr,
Yield a mossy bed for the brown and weary
Limbs of the shepherd.

Echo ever wafts through the drooping frondage,
Ceaseless silver murmur of water falling
In the grotto cool of the Nymphs, the sacred
Haunt of Immortals;

Down the sides of rocks that are gray and lichen'd
Trickle tiny rills, whose expectant tinkle
Drips with gurgle hushed in the clear glimmering
Depths of the basin.

Fair on royal couches of leaves recumbent,
Interspersed with languor of waxen lilies,
Lotus flowers empurple the pool whose edge is
Cushioned with mosses;

Here recline the Nymphs at the hour of twilight,
Back in shadows dim of the cave, their golden
Sea-green eyes half lidded, up to their supple
Waists in the water.

Sheltered once by ferns I espied them binding
Tresses long, the tint of lilac and orange;
Just beyond the shimmer of light their bodies
Roseate glistened;

Deftly, then, they girdled their loins with garlands,
Linked with leaves luxuriant limb and shoulder;
On their breasts they bruised the red blood of roses
Fresh from the garden.

She of orange hair was the Nymph Euxanthis,
And the lilac-tressed were Iphis and Io;
How they laughed, relating at length their ease in
Evading the Satyr.

APHRODITE'S DOVES

When the drifting gray of the vesper shadow
Dimmed their upward path through the midmost azure,
And the length of night overtook them distant
Far from Olympus;

Far away from splendor and joy of Paphos,
From the voice and smile of their peerless Mistress,
Back to whom their truant wings were in rapture
Speeding belated;

Chilled at heart and grieving they drooped their pinions,
Circled slowly, dipping in flight toward Lesbos,
Down through dusk that darkened on Mitylene's
Columns of marble;

Down through glory wan of the fading sunset,
Veering ever toward the abode of Sappho,
Toward my home, the fane of the glad devoted
Slave of the Goddess;

Soon they gained the tile of my roof and rested,
Slipped their heads beneath their wings while I watched them
Sink to sleep and dreams, in the warm and drowsy
Night of midsummer.

ANACREON'S SONG

Golden-throned Muse, sing the song that in olden
Days was sung of love and delight in Teos,
In the goodly land of the lovely women:
Strains that in other

Years the hoary bard with the youthful fancy
Set to mirthful stir of flutes, when the dancing
Nymphs that poured the wine for the poet's banquet
Mixed it with kisses;

Sing the song while I, in the arms of Atthis,
Seal her lips to mine with a lover's fervor,
Breathe her breath and drink her sighs to the honeyed
Lull of the melics.

THE DAUGHTER OF CYPRUS

Dreaming I spake with the Daughter of Cyprus,
Heard the languor soft of her voice, the blended
Suave accord of tones interfused with laughter
Low and desirous;

Dreaming saw her dread ineffable beauty,
Saw through texture fine of her clinging tunic
Blush the fire of flesh, the rose of her body,
Radiant, blinding;

Saw through filmy meshes the melting lovely
Flow of line, the exquisite curves, whence piercing
Rapture reached with tangible touch to thrill me,
Almost to slay me;

Saw the gleaming foot, and the golden sandal
Held by straps of Lydian work thrice doubled
Over the instep's arch, and up the rounded
Dazzling ankle;

Saw the charms that shimmered from knee to shoulder,
Hint of hues, than milk or the snowdrift whiter;
Secret grace, the shrine of the soul of passion,
Glow that consumed me;

Saw the gathered mass of her xanthic tresses,
Mitra-bound, escape from the clasping fillet,
Float and shine as clouds in the sunset splendor,
Mists in the dawn-fire;

Saw the face immortal, and daring greatly,
Raised my eyes to hers of unfathomed azure,
Drank their world's desire, their limitless longing,
Swooned and was nothing.

THE DISTAFF

Come, ye dainty Graces and lovely Muses,
Rosy-armed and pure and with fairest tresses,
Come from groves on Helicon's hill where murmur
Founts that are holy;

Come with dancing step and with lips harmonic,
Gather near and view my ivory distaff,
Gift from Cos my brother Charaxus brought me,
Sailing from Egypt;

Sailing back to Lesbos from far Naucratis,
From the seven mouths of the Nile and Egypt
Up the blue Ægean, the island-dotted
Ocean of Hellas;

Choicest wool alone will I spin for fabrics,
Winding reel with threads for the cloths as fleecy,
Soft and fine as they bring from far Phoea,
Sidon or Sardis;

While I weave my thought shall engird the giver,
Whether here, or far on the sea, or resting
Couched in shady courts with the lovely garland
Girls of Naucratis.

THE SLEEP WIND

Softer than mists o'er the pale green of waters,
O'er the charmed sea, shod with sandals of shadow
Comes the warm sleep wind of Argolis, floating
Garlands of fragrance;

Comes the sweet wind by the still hours attended,
Touching tired lids on the shores dim with distance,
Ever its way toward the headland of Lesbos,
Toward Mitylene.

Faintly one fair star of evening enkindles
On the dusk afar its lone fire Ætean,
Shining serene till the darkness will deepen
Others to splendor;

Bringing ineffable peace, and the gladsome
Return with the night of all things that morning
Ruthlessly parted, the child to its mother,
Lover to lover.

From the marble court of rose-crowned companions,
All alone my feet again seek the little
Theatre pledged to the Muse, now deserted,
Facing the surges;

Where the carved Pan-heads that laugh down the gentle
Slope of broad steps to the refluent ripple,
Flute from their thin pipes the dithyrambs deathless,
Songs all unuttered.

Empty each seat where my girl friends acclaimed me,
Poets with names on the tiered stone engraven,
Over whose verge blooms the apple tree, drifting
Perfume and petals;

Gone Telesippa and tender Gyrinno,
Anactoria, woman divine; Atthis,
Subtlest of soul, fair Damophyla, Dica,
Maids of the Muses.

Here an hour past soul-enraptured they listened
While my rapt heart breathed its pæan impassioned,
Chanted its wild prayer to thee, Aphrodite,
Daughter of Cyprus;

Now to their homes are they gone in the city,
Pensive to dream limb-relaxed while the languid
Slaves come and lift from the tresses they loosen,
Flowers that have faded.

Thou alone, Sappho, art sole with the silence,
Sole with night and dreams that are darkness, weaving
Thoughts that are sighs from the heart and their meaning
Vague as the shadow;

When the great silence shall come to thee, sad one,
Men that forget shall remember thy music,
Murmur thy name that shall steal on their passion
Soft as the sleep wind.

THE REPROACH

Kypris, hear my prayer to thee and the Nereids!
Safely bring the ship of my brother homewards,
Bring him back unharmed to the heart that loves him,
Throbbing remorseful;

Fair Immortal, banish from mind, I pray thee,
Every discord's hint that of yore estranged us;
Grant that never again dissension's hateful
Wrangle shall part us;

May he never in days to come remember
Keen reproach of mine that had grieved him sorely;
Words that broke my very heart when I heard them
Uttered by others;

Words that wounded deep and recurring often,
Bowed his head with shame at the public banquet;
Where my scorn, amid festal joy and laughter,
Sharpened the covert

Jests that stung his pride and assailed his folly,
Slave-espoused when he, a Lesbian noble,
Might have won the fairest in Mitylene,
Virgins the noblest;

Open slurs that linked his name with Doricha,
Lovely slave that Xanthes had sold in Egypt;
She whose wondrous charms the wealth of Charaxus
Ransomed from bondage.

Now that he is gone and my anger vanished,
Keen regret and grief for the pain I gave him
Pierce my heart, and fear of loss that is anguish
Darkens the daylight.

LONG AGO

Long ago beloved, thy memory, Atthis,
Saddens still my heart as the soft Æolic
Twilight deepens down on the sea, and fitful
Winds that have wandered

Over groves of myrtle at Amathonte
Waft forgotten passion on breaths of perfume.
Long ago, how madly I loved thee, Atthis!
Faithless, light-hearted

Loved one, mine no more, who lovest another
More than me; the silent flute and the faded
Garlands haunt the heart of me thou forgettest,
Long since thy lover.

EPITHALAMIA

THRENODES

HYMENAIOS

Artisans, raise high the roof beam!
Tall is the bridegroom as Ares,
Taller by far than the tallest,
O Hymenæus!

Ay! towering over his fellows,
As over men of all other
Lands towers the Lesbian singer,
O Hymenæus!

Well-favored, too, is the maiden,
Eyes that are sweeter than honey,
Fair both in face and in figure,
O Hymenæus!

For there was never another
Virgin in loveliness like her,
By Aphrodite so honored,
O Hymenæus!

O happy bridegroom, the wedding
Comes to the point of completion;
Thou hast the maid of thy choosing,
O Hymenæus!

See how a paleness suffuses
Soft o'er her exquisite features,
Passion's benign premonition,
O Hymenæus!

Go to the couch reluctant,
Rejoicing and sweet to the bridegroom;
He in his turn is rejoicing,

O Hymenæus!

May Hesperus lead thee, and Hera,
She whom to-night that ye honor,
Silver-throned Goddess of marriage,
O Hymenæus!

BRIDAL SONG

Bride, that goest to the bridal chamber
In the dove-drawn car of Aphrodite,
By a band of dimpled
Loves surrounded;

Bride, of maidens all the fairest image
Mitylene treasures of the Goddess,
Rosy-ankled Graces
Are thy playmates;

Bride, O fair and lovely, thy companions
Are the gracious hours that onward passing
For thy gladsome footsteps
Scatter garlands.

Bride, that blushing like the sweetest apple
On the very branch's end, so strangely
Overlooked, ungathered
By the gleaners;

Bride, that like the apple that was never
Overlooked but out of reach so plainly,
Only one thy rarest
Fruit may gather;

Bride, that into womanhood has ripened
For the harvest of the bridegroom only,
He alone shall taste thy
Hoarded sweetness.

EPITHALAMIUM

Vesper is here! behold
Faint gleams that welcome shine!
Rise from the feast, O youths,
And chant the fescennine!

Before the porch we sing
The hymeneal song;
Vesper is here, O youths!
The star we waited long.

We lead the festal groups
Across the bridegroom's porch;
Vesper is here, O youths!
Wave high the bridal torch.

Hail, noble bridegroom, hail!
The virgin fair has come;
Unlatch the door and lead
Her timid footsteps home.

Hail, noble bridegroom, hail!
Straight as a tender tree;
Fond as a folding vine
Thy bride will cling to thee.

PIERIA'S ROSE

Pale death shall come, and thou and thine shall be,
Then and thereafter, to all memory
Forgotten as the wind that yesterday
Blew the last lingering apple buds away;

For thou hadst never that undying rose
To grace the brow and shed immortal glows;
Pieria's fadeless flower that few may claim
To wreath and save thy unremembered name.

Ay! even on the fields of Dis unknown,
Obscure among the shadows and alone,
Thy flitting shade shall pass uncomforted
Of any heed from all the flitting dead.

But no one maid, I think, beneath the skies,
At any time shall live and be as wise,
In sooth, as I am; for the Muses Nine
Have made me honored and their gifts are mine;

And men, I think, will never quite forget
My songs or me; so long as stars shall set
Or sun shall rise, or hearts feel love's desire,
My voice shall cross their dreams, a sigh of fire.

LAMENT FOR ADONIS

Ah, for Adonis!
See, he is dying,
Delicate, lovely,
Slender Adonis.

Ah, for Adonis!
Weep, O ye maidens,
Beating your bosoms,
Rending your tunics.

O Cytherea,
Hasten, for never
Loved thou another
As thy Adonis.

See, on the rosy
Cheek with its dimple,
Blushing no longer,
Thanatos' shadow.

Save him, O Goddess!
Thou, the beguiler,
All-powerful, holy,
Stay the dread evil.

Ah, for Adonis!
No more at vintage
Time will he come with
Bloom of the meadows.

Ah, for Adonis!
See, he is dying,
Fading as flowers
With the lost summer.

THE STRICKEN FLOWER

Think not to ever look as once of yore,
At this, upon my love; for thou no more
Wilt find intact upon its stem the flower
Thy guile left slain and bleeding in that hour.

So ruthless shepherds crush beneath their feet
The hill flower blooming in the summer heat;
The hyacinth whose purple heart is found
Left bruised and dead, to darken on the ground.

DEATH

Death is an evil; so the Gods decree,
So they have judged, and such must rightly be
Our mortal view; for they who dwell on high
Had never lived, had it been good to die.

And so the poet's house should never know
Of tears and lamentations any show;
Such things befit not us who deathless sing
Of love and beauty, gladness and the spring.

No hint of grief should mar the features of
Our dreams of endless beauty, lasting love;
For they reflect the joy inviolate,
Eternal calm that fronts whatever fate.

Clëis, my darling, grieve no more, I pray!
Let wandering winds thy sorrow bear away,
And all our care; my daughter, let thy smile
Shine through thy tears and gladden me the while.

PERSEPHONE

I saw a tender maiden plucking flowers
Once, long ago, in the bright morning hours;
And then from heaven I saw a sudden cloud
Fall swift and dark, and heard her cry aloud.

Again I looked, but from my open door
My anxious eyes espied the maid no more;
The cloud had vanished, bearing her away
To underlands beyond the smiling day.

PARTHENEIA

DIDAKTIKA

MAIDENHOOD

Do I long for maidenhood?
Do I long for days
When upon the mountain slope
I would stand and gaze
Over the Ægean's blue
Melting into mist,
Ere with love my virgin lips
Cercolas had kissed?

Maidenhood, O maidenhood,
Whither hast thou flown?
*To a land beyond the sea
Thou hast never known.*
Maidenhood, O maidenhood,
Wilt return to me?
*Never will my bloom again
Give its grace to thee.*

Now the autumn skies are low,
Youth and summer sped;
Shepherd hills are far away,
Cercolas is dead.
Mitylene's marble courts
Echo with my name; —
Maidenhood, we never dreamed,
Long ago of fame.

EVER MAIDEN

I shall be ever maiden,
Ever the little child,
In my passionate quest for the lovely,
By earth's glad wonder beguiled.

I shall be ever maiden,
Standing in soul apart,
For the Gods give the secret of beauty
Alone to the virgin heart.

CLËIS

Daughter of mine, so fair,
With a form like a golden flower,
Wherefore thy pensive air
And the dreams in the myrtle bower?

Clëis, beloved, thy eyes
That are turned from my gaze, thy hand
That trembles so, I prize
More than all the Lydian land;

More than the lovely hills
With the Lesbian olive crowned; —
Tell me, darling, what ills
In the gloom of thy thought are found?

Daughter of mine, come near
And thy head on my knees recline;
Whisper and never fear,
For the beat of thy heart is mine.

Sweet mother, I can turn
With content to my loom no more;
My bosom throbs, I yearn
For a youth that my eyes adore;

Lykas of Eresus,
Whom I knew when a little child;
My heart by Love is thus
With the sweetest of pain beguiled.

ASPIRATION

I do not think with my two arms to touch the sky,
I do not dream to do almighty things;
So small a singing bird may never soar so high,
To beat the sapphire fire with baffled wings.

I do not think with my two arms to touch the sky,
I do not dream by any chance to share
With deathless Gods the bliss of Paphos they deny
To men behind the azure veil of air.

HERO, OF GYARA

I taught Hero, of Gyara, the swift runner;
Swifter far was she than Atalanta,
When through clinging fleece of her wind-rippled
Garments blushed the glimmer of her limbs.

I taught Hero, of Gyara, the swift runner;
Lovelier was she than Atalanta,
When the straining vision of the suitor
Saw her beauty mock impending death.

I taught Hero, of Gyara, the swift runner,
All the singing numbers of Terpander,
Metres of Archilochus and Alcman,
And my melic verse that glows supreme.

I taught Hero, of Gyara, the swift runner,
Sapphics with their triple surge of music
Melting in the final verse Adonic,
Like the foam fall of a spendid wave.

COURAGE

Faint not in thy strong heart!
Nor downcast stand apart;
Beyond the reach of daring will there lies
No beauty's prize.

Faint not in thy strong heart!
Through temple, field and mart,
Courage alone the guerdon from the fray
May bear away.

THE BOAST OF ARES

Ares said he would drag
Hephestus by force
From Poseidon's palace
Deep down in the sea;
Where he had fashioned
The cunning throne
With the secret chains.

He presented the throne,
Forsooth, as a gift
To the queen of heaven;
But Hera soon found
For revenge on her
Who had him cast
From the home of Gods.

For secure in its clasp
Of adamant gold
She was held imprisoned,
The prey of his guile;
And Hephestus knew
By him alone
Could the queen be freed.

But the great God of war
Made boast of his strength;
He would bring the forger
Of metals and tricks
On high to release
Hera, and end
Her enraged despair.

Ares said he would drag
Hephestus by force,

But was made to waver
And flee when assailed
With a blazing brand
By the dark God
Of the underworld.

GOLD

Gold is the son of Zeus,
Immortal, bright;
Nor moth nor worm may eat it,
Nor rust tarnish.

So are the Muse's gifts
The offspring fair,
That merit from high heaven
Youth eternal.

GNOMICS

I

My ways are quiet, none may find
My temper of malignant kind;
For one should check the words that start
When anger spreads within the heart.

II

Who from my hands what I can spare
Of gifts accept the largest share,
Those are the very ones who boast
No gratitude and wrong me most.

III

He who in face and form is fair
Must needs be good, the Gods declare;
But he whose thought and act are right
Will soon be equal fair to sight.

IV

Beauty of youth is but the flower
Of spring, whose pleasure lasts an hour;
While worth that knows no mortal doom
Is like the amaranthine bloom.

PRIDE

Pride not thyself upon a ring,
Or any trinket thing
Of fleeting value, dross or gold.

Wealth, lacking worth, is no safe friend,
Though both to life may lend,
In just proportion, joy untold.

LETO AND NIOBE

Leto and Niobe were friends full dear,
The Goddess' heart and woman's heart were one
In that maternal love that men revere,
Love that endures when other loves are done.

But Niobe with all a mother's pride,
Artless and foolish, would not be denied;
And boasted that her children were more fair
Than Leto's lovely children of the air.

The proud Olympians vowed revenge for this,
Irate Apollo, angered Artemis;
They slew her children, heedless of her moan,
And with the last her heart was turned to stone.

THE DYE

From Scythian wood they brew
The dye whose yellow hue
Turns gold the lovely hair
Of Lesbians fair.

So, Zanthis, slave of mine,
Shall dip the fleeces fine,
And dye the robes I made
A saffron shade.

EROTIKA

DITHYRAMBS

HYMN TO PAPHIA

Immortal Paphia! have I earned thy hate,
That I should burn in passion's fatal flame?
Is not my constant service thine to claim,
My prayer's appeal with praise of thee elate?

Has not my life been one sole hymn of thee,
One quivering chord on Love's harp overwrought?
My soul has trembled up to thee in thought,
Probed to its depth thy every ecstasy.

Are not my countless heart-beats each a vow,
Of tribute throbs a garland? For thy gain
The Fates have drenched my soul in passion's rain,
Pieria's roses twined about my brow.

The virgin harvest of my heart was thine,
I shuddered in the joy that half consumed;
The votive garlands on thy altar bloomed,
My days were songs to nights of bliss divine.

Why try me, then, with torture, gracious Queen?
Why verge me on this rapture's dread abyss,
Hold breast from breast and stay the yearning kiss?
Ah, couldst thou fashion pain that stung less keen?

The throe of Tantalus is mine to bear,
Beauty that Thetis-like eludes my clasp;
Glances that lure, that make each breath a gasp,
And then disdainful gloat at my despair.

Scornful she dwells beyond my ardor's clutch,
Bathed in an aureole of carnal fire; —
O bind her equal slave to fond desire,

Let passion's tingling warmth her being touch!

Come to me, Goddess, come as once of old,
Hearing my voice implore thee from afar,
I drew to earth thy dazzling avatar;
Accord the smile of piercing bliss untold.

Ask me the dear suave question phrased of yore;
"Sappho, who grieveth now thy mad fond heart?
Wouldst win her beauty, she who frowns apart?
Wild as thou lovest, she soon shall love thee more."

O fair Olympian, answer thus, I pray!
Release me from this torment, yield my arms
The transport thirsted of her folded charms,
In glow that welds her heart to mine for aye.

EROS

From the gnarled branches of the apple trees
The heavy petals, lifted by the breeze,
Fluttered on puffs of odor fine and fell
In the clear water of the garden well;

And some a bolder zephyr blew in sport
Across the marble reaches of my court,
And some by sudden gusts were wafted wide
Toward sea and city, down the mountain side.

Lesbos seemed Paphos, isled in rosy glow,
Green olive hills, the violet vale below;
The air was azure fire and o'er the blue
Still sea the doves of Aphrodite flew.

My dreaming eyes saw Eros from afar
Coming from heaven in his mother's car,
In purple tunic clad; and at my heart
The God was aiming his relentless dart.

He whom fair Aphrodite called her son,
She, the adored, she, the imperial One;
He passed as winds that shake the soul, as pains
Sweet to the heart, as fire that warms the veins;

He passed and left my limbs dissolved in dew,
Relaxed and faint, with passion quivered through;
Exhausted with spent thrills of dread delight,
A sudden darkness rushing on my sight.

PASSION

Now Love shakes my soul, a mighty
Wind from the high mountain falling
Full on the oaks of the forest;

Now, limb-relaxing, it masters
My life and implacable thrills me,
Rending with anguish and rapture.

Now my heart, paining my bosom,
Pants with desire as a mænad
Mad for the orgiac revel.

Now under my skin run subtle
Arrows of flame, and my body
Quivers with surge of emotion.

Now long importunate yearnings
Vanquish with surfeit my reason;
Fainting my senses forsake me.

APHRODITE'S PRAISE

O Sappho, why art thou ever
Singing with praises the blessed
Queen of the heaven?

Why does the heart in thy bosom
Ever revert in its yearning
Throb to the Goddess?

Why are thy senses unsated
Ever in quest of elusive
Love that is deathless?

Ah, gracious Daughter of Cyprus,
Never can I as a mortal
Tire of thy service.

Thou art the breath of my body,
The blood in my veins, and the glowing
Pulse of my bosom.

Omnipotent, burning, resistless,
Thou art the passion that shaking
Masters me ever.

Thou art the crisis of rapture
Relaxing my limbs, and the melting
Ebb of emotion;

Bringing the tears to my lashes,
Sighs to my lips, in the swooning
Excess of passion.

O golden-crowned Aphrodite,
Grant I shall ever be grateful,
Sure of thy favor;

Worthy the lot of thy priestess,
Supreme in the song that forever
Rings with thy praises.

THE FIRST KISS

And down I set the cushion
Upon the couch that she,
Relaxed supine upon it,
Might give her lips to me.

As some enamored priestess
At Aphrodite's shrine,
Entranced I bent above her
With sense of the divine.

She had, by nature nubile,
In years a child, no hint
Of any secret knowledge
Of passion's least intent.

Her mouth for immolation
Was ripe, and mine the art;
And one long kiss of passion
Deflowered her virgin heart.

ODE TO ATTHIS

I loved you, Atthis, once, long years ago!
My blood was flame that thrilled to passion's throe;
Now long neglect has quenched the olden fire,
And blight of drifting years effaced desire.

I loved you, Atthis — joy of long ago —
Love shook my soul as winds on forests blow;
This lawless heart that dared exhaust delight,
Unsated strove and maddened through the night.

I loved you, Atthis, once, long years ago!
With pain whose surge I felt to anguish grow;
Suffered the storms that waste the heart and leave
A desert shore where seas but break to grieve.

I loved you, Atthis — spring of long ago —
Watched you depart, to Andromeda go;
Then I, as keen despair its shadow cast,
O'er my deserted threshold, sobbing, passed.

I loved you, Atthis, once, long years ago!
The thought of me is hateful now, I know;
And all the lavish tenderness of old
Has gone from me and left my bosom cold.

I loved you, Atthis — dream of long ago —

* * * * *

How the fond words, impassioned music low,
Sustain the sigh of love's divine regret
No length of time may bid the heart forget.

COMPARISON

Less soft a Tyrian robe
Of texture fine,
Less delicate a rose
Than flesh of thine.

Whiter thy breast than snow
That virgin lies,
And deeper than the blue
Of seas thy eyes.

More golden than the fruit
Of orange trees,
Thy locks that floating lure
The satyr breeze.

Less fine of silver string
An Orphic lyre,
Less sweet than thy low laugh
That wakes desire.

THE SACRIFICE

Upon a cushion soft
My limbs I place,
My every garment doffed
For deeper grace;
From burning doves embalmed
In baccharis,
The scented fumes have calmed
Me like a kiss.

Beyond the phallic shrine
That tripods light,
I pledge with holy wine
An image white;
Anadyomene,
Than foam more fair,
When from the ravished sea
She rose to air.

Daughter of God, accept
These gifts of mine!
Last night my body slept
In arms divine.
These sated lips and eyes
That erstwhile sued,
Accord this sacrifice
In gratitude.

LEDA

Once on a time
They say that Leda found
Beneath the thyme
An egg upon the ground;

And yet the swan
She fondled long ago
Was whiter than
Its shell of peeping snow.

AMŒBEUM: ALCÆUS AND SAPPHO

ALCUSÆUS

Violet-weaving Sappho, pure and lovely,
Softly-smiling Sappho, I would utter
Something that my secret hope has cherished,
Did no painful sense of shame deter me.

SAPPHO

Had the impulse of thy heart been honest,
It had urged no evil supplication;
Shame had not abashed thy eyes before me,
And thy words had done thee no dishonor.

ALCÆUS

Softly-smiling Sappho, longing bids me
Tell thee all that in my heart lies hidden.

SAPPHO

Have no fear, Alcæus, to offend me!
Thy emotion stirs my heart to pity.

ALCÆUS

I desire thee, violet-weaving Sappho!
Love thee madly, softly-smiling Sappho!

SAPPHO

Hush, Alcæus! thou must choose a younger
Comrade for thy couch, for I would never
Join thy years to mine — the Gods forbid it —
Youth and ardent fire to age and ashes.

THE LOVE OF SELENE

Across the still sea's moonlit wave
Selene came
Softly to seek the Latmian cave,
Her breast aflame

With secret passion's ruthless throe,
Her scruples done,
And burning with desire to know
Endymion.

THE CRETAN DANCE

As the moon in all her splendor
Slowly rose above the forest,
Silent stood the Cretan women
Round the altar.

Girdled close their clinging tunics,
Made of some transparent fabric,
Traced the every curve and lissome
Of their bodies.

With revering eyes uplifted
To the round and rising planet,
Soon its drifting beams of silver
Lit their faces.

Soft and clear its sphere effulgent,
Full defined above the treetops,
Steeped in pale unearthly glamor
All the landscape.

When the argent glimmer rested
On the altar piled with garlands,
And its glow unveiled the marble
Aphrodite;

Linking hands, the Cretan women
Moving gracefully with metric
Steps began to dance a measure
To the Goddess.

All so light their feet unsandalled
Pressed the velvet grass in treading,
That they scarcely bruised its tender
Blooming verdure.

Slowly turning in a circle
To the east, their voices chanted
In a plaintive note the sacred
Ithyphallics;

Then they paused, their steps retracing
Toward the west, and answered strophe
By antistrophe with choric
Tones accordant;

With the aftersong epodic,
Standing all before the altar,
Lo! the hymn in praise of Paphos
Was completed.

TO ALCÆUS

Countless are the cups thou drainest
In thy hymns to Dionysos,
O Alcæus!
War and wine alone thou singest; —
Wherefore not of Aphrodite,
O Alcæus!
Spacious halls are thine where many
Trophies hang in Ares' honor,
O Alcæus!
Brazen shields and shining helmets,
Plates of brass, Chalcidian broad-swords,
O Alcæus!
When with winter roars the Thracian
North wind through the leafless forest,
O Alcæus!
Thou dost heap the fire and banish
Care with many a tawny goblet,
O Alcæus!

HYPORCHEME

Thus contend the maidens
In the cretic dance,
Rosy arms that glisten,
Eyes that glance;
Cheeks as fair as blossoms,
Parted lips that glow,
With their honeyed voices
Chanting low;
With their plastic bodies
Swaying to the flute,
Moving with the music
Never mute;
Graceful the orchestric
Figures they unfold,
While the vesper heaven
Turns to gold.
Turns to gold.

LARICHUS

While charming maids plait garlands for thy brows,
Larichus, bring the pledge for this carouse
Like lovely Ganymede, brother mine,
And cool from thy patera pour the wine.
Thy slender limbs have all a Satyr's grace,
Hylas, the Wood-God, dimples in thy face;
These maids of mine, beloved and loving me,
My dreams have made thy Nymphs to sport with thee.
I heard fair Mitylene's plaudits cease
O'er Lykas, Menon and Dinnomenes;
And hail thy beauty worthy of the prize,
Cupbearer to the council of the wise.
No noble youth the prytaneum holds,
Whose graceful form the purple tunic folds
Can match with thee, when on affairs of state
All Lesbos gathers with the wise and great.

SPRING

Come, shell divine, be vocal now for me,
As when the Hebrus river and the sea
To Lesbos bore, on waves harmonious,
The head and golden lyre of Orpheus.

Calliope, queen of the tuneful throng,
Descend and be the Muse of melic song;
For through my frame life's tides renewing bring
The glad vein-warming vigor of the spring.

The skies that dome the earth with far blue fire
Make the wide land one temple of desire; —
Just now across my cheek I felt a God,
In the enraptured breeze, pass zephyr-shod.

Was that Pan's flute, O Atthis, that we heard,
Or the soft love-note of a woodland bird?
That flame a scarlet wing that skimmed the stream,
Or the red flash of our impassioned dream?

Ah, soon again we two shall gather fair
Garlands of dill and rose to deck our bare
White arms that cling, white breast that burns to breast,
When the long night of love shall banish rest.

GIRL FRIENDS

PRELUDE

Deftly on my little
Seven-stringed barbitos,
Now to please my girl friends
Songs I set to music.

Maidens fair, companions
Of the Muses, never
Toward you shall my feelings
Undergo a change.

Chanted in a plaintive
Old Ionic measure,
All the songs I give you
Are the songs of love.

ANDROMEDA

What bucolic maiden
Now thy heart bewitches,
O my Andromeda
Of the strange amours?
Round her awkward ankles
She has not the faintest
Sense of art to draw her
Long ungraceful tunic.
Yet she surely makes thee,
O my Andromeda,
For thy sweet unlawful
Love a fair requital.
Joy and praise attend thee,
In thy keen perceptive
Taste for beauty, daughter
Of Polyanax!
Of Polyanax!

EUNEICA

Aphrodite's handmaid,
Bright as gold thou earnest,
Tender woven garlands
Round thy tender neck;

Sweet as soft Persuasion,
Lissome as the Graces,
Shy Euneica, lovely
Girl from Salamis.

Slender thou as Syrinx,
As the waving reed-nymph,
Once by Pan, the god of
Summer winds, deflowered.

On thy lips whose quiver
Seems to plead for pity,
Mine shall rest and linger
Like the mouth of Pan

On the mouth of Syrinx,
When his breath that filled her
Blew through all her body
Music of his love.

GORGO

Gorgo, I am weary
Of thy love's insistence,
Thou to me appearest
An ill-favored child.

Though I am than Gello
Fonder still of virgins,
Toward thee I have never
Felt the least desire.

Yesternight I knew not
What to do, for pity
Moved my bosom deeply,
Seeing thee implore.

Harassed by alternate
Yielding and refusal,
I was half persuaded
Then to grant thy prayer.

At my door thy presence
Lingers like a shadow;
Vain wouldst thou reproach me
With appealing eyes.

Dost thou think by constant
Proofs of lasting passion,
Slowly my obdurate
Will to wear away?

Gorgo, I am weary
Of thy love's insistence,
And my strength exhausted
Grants thy wish at last.

MNASIDICA

Set, O Dica, garlands on thy lovely
Glinting mass of fine and golden tresses,
Sprays of dill with fingers soft entwining
While I stand apart to better judge.

Those who have fair wreaths about the forehead,
Breathing brentheian odor to the senses,
Ever first find favor with the Graces
Who from wreathless suppliants turn away.

Dica, Mnasidica, thou art shapely
With the flowing curves of Aphrodite;
Eyes the color of her azure ocean
Washing wide on Cyprus' languid shore.

In thy every movement grace unconscious
Sways the rhythmic poem of thy body,
Charming with elusive undulation
Like a splendid lily in the wind.

As I stand apart to judge the better
Fair effects that roses add to beauty,
All thy rays of loveliness concentered
Sun me till I swoon with swift desire.

TELESIPPA

Sleep thou in the bosom
Of thy tender girl friend,
Telesippa, gentle
Maiden from Miletus.

Like twin petals shyly
Closing to the darkness,
Dewy on your drooping
Lids shall fall her kisses.

While her arms enfold you,
On your drowsy senses
Shall her soft caresses
Seal delicious languor.

Warm from her desireful
Heart the flush of passion
On your cheek unconscious,
With her sighs shall deepen.

All the long sweet night-time,
Sleepless while you slumber,
She shall lie and quiver
With her love's mad longing.

GYRINNO

Now the silver crescent
Of the moon has vanished,
With the golden Pleiads
Drifting down the west.

It is after midnight
And the time is passing,
Hours we pledged to passion
And I sleep alone.

Anger ill becomes thee,
Tender-souled Gyrinno,
Shapelier is Dica
But less loved by me.

Art thou still relentless,
Wilful one, annulling
All thy protestations
In the fervid past?

Can it, O Charites,
Be thou hast forgotten?
Dost thou love another,
Even now, perchance?

Ah, my tears are falling,
Yet in my despairing
Mood I lie and listen
For thy furtive step;

For the lightest rustle
Of thy flowing garment,
For thy sweet and panting
Whisper at the door.

Now the moon has vanished
With the golden Pleiads;
It is after midnight
And I sleep alone.

MEGARA

Thou burnest us, Megara,
With thy passions wild;
Bringing from Panormus
Such unbridled fires.

Thou burnest us, a supple
Flow of tortured flame,
Raging, biting, searing,
Lawless of the will.

Thou burnest us, Megara,
Love must know reserve,
Curbing power to keep it
Keener for restraint.

ERINNA

Haughtier than thou, O fair Erinna,
I have never met with any maiden.

Such a careless scorn as thine for passion
Proves a dire affront to Aphrodite.

When with soft desire she wounds thy bosom,
Thou shalt know love's pain and doubly suffer.

Keep the gifts I gave thee, long rejected;
Fabrics for thy lap from far Phoea,

Babylonian unguents, scented sandals,
And the costly mitra for thy tresses;

Tripods worked in brass to flank the altar
With the ivory figure of the Goddess;

Where the sacrificial fumes from sacred
Flames shall rise to gladden and appease her,

In the hour when at her call thy fervid
Breast and mouth to mine shall be relinquished.

GONGYLA

It was when the sunset
Burned with saffron fire,
And Apollo's coursers
Turned below the hills,

That on Mitylene's
Marble bridge we met,
Gongyla, thou golden
Maid of Colophon.

Like the breath of morning
Or a breeze from sea,
Fresh thy beauty smote me,
Virile of the north.

Startled by thy vision,
Transports half divine
Flooded veins and bosom,
Shook me with desire.

Soon the kinder sunglow
Of Æolic lands
Melted all the futile
Snows about thy heart.

DAMOPHYLA

Cold of heart and strangely
Uninclined to passion,
Wisdom's vigil leaves thee,
Proud Damophyla.

Sapphics thou hast written,
Verses in my metre,
With a skill surpassing
In the melic art.

Love's superb enchantment
Thou art fain to banish,
Like the virgin Huntress
Long by thee adored.

Molded by thy tunic,
Every arching contour
Of her chaste and noble
Form I dream to see;

Even view her stepping
From the leafy covert
Down the dawn-white valley,
Stately as a stag.

Long I sued but found thee
Deaf to all entreaty,
Till one summer twilight
Listless in the heat;

Soothed by slumber's languor,
And my low monodic
Voice that hymned a paeon
In the praise of love;

Loth to yield yet vanquished,
As I knelt beside thee,
All thy long resistance
To my kiss succumbed.

ANAGORA

Anagora, fairest
Spoil of fateful battle,
Babylonian temples
Knew thy luring song.

Wrested from barbaric
Captors for thy beauty,
Thou wert made a priestess
At Mylitta's shrine.

Once these flexile fingers
Clasped in mine so closely,
Neath the temple's arches
Thrummed the tabor soft.

Thou hast taught me secrets
Of the cryptic chambers,
How the zonahs worship
In the burning East;

Raptures that my wildest
Dreaming never pictured,
Arts of love that charmed me,
Subtle, new and strange.

Hearken to my earnest
Prayer, O Aphrodite!
May the night be doubled
Now for our delight.
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PHAON

PHILOMEL

Philomel in my garden,
Messenger sweet of springtide,
From the bough of the olive tree utter
Tidings ecstatic.

Linger long on thy olden
Note as in days remembered;
Ere the Boatman that knew Aphrodite
Ravished my vision.

Fatal glamor of beauty,
Beauty of Gods made mortal;
Ah, before its delight I am ever
Fearful of heaven.

Spring in breeze and the blossom,
Grasses and leaves and odors,
On my heart with the breath of a vanished
April is shaken;

Shaken with thrill and regret of
Lost caresses and kisses;
Anactoria's memory, Atthis
Never forgotten.

Philomel in my garden,
Messenger sweet of springtide,
From the bough of the olive tree utter
Tidings ecstatic.

GOLDEN PULSE

Golden pulse grew on the shore,
Ferns along the hill,
And the red cliff roses bore
Bees to drink their fill;

Bees that from the meadows bring
Wine of melilot,
Honey-sups on golden wing
To the garden grot.

But to me, neglected flower,
Phaon will not see,
Passion brings no crowning hour,
Honey nor the bee.

THE SWALLOW

Daughter of Pandion, lovely
Swallow that veers at my window,
Swift on the flood of the sunshine
Darting thy shadow;

What is thy innocent purpose,
Why dost thou hover and haunt me?
Is it a kinship of sorrow
Brings thee anear me?

Must thou forever be tongueless,
Flying in fear of Tereus?
Must he for Itys pursue thee,
Changed to a lapwing?

Tireless of pinion and never
Resting on bush or the branches,
Close to the earth, up the azure,
Over the treetops;

After thy wing in its madness
Follows my glance, as a flitting
Child on the track of its mother
Hastens in silence.

Daughter of Pandion, lovely
Swallow that veers at my window,
Hast thou a message from Cyprus
Telling of Phaon?

TIDINGS

She wrapped herself in linen woven close,
Stuffs delicate and texture-fine as those
The dark Nile traders for our bartering
From Egypt, Crete and far Phoecea bring.

Love lent her feet the wings of winds to reach
(Whose steps stir not the shingle of the beach)
My marble court and, breathless, bid me know
My lover's sails across the harbor blow.

He seemed to her, as to himself he seems,
Like some bright God long treasured in her dreams;
She saw him standing at his galley's prow —
My Phaon, mine, in Mitylene now!

HESPERUS

Hesperus shines
Low on the eastern wave,
Off toward the Asian shore;

Over faint lines
Whose grays and purples pave
Where seas night-calmed adore.

Fair vesper fire,
Fairest of stars, the light
Benign of secret bliss;

Star of desire,
Bringing to me with night
Dreams and my Phaon's kiss.

DAWN

Just now the golden-sandalled Dawn
Peered through the lattice of my room;
Why must thou fare so soon, my Phaon?

Last night I met thee at the shore,
A thousand hues were in the sky;
The breeze from Cyprus blew, my Phaon!

I drew, to lave thy heated brow,
My kerchief dripping from the sea;
Why hadst thou sailed so far, my Phaon?

Far up the narrow mountain paths
We heard the shepherds fluting home;
Like some white God thou seemed, my Phaon!

And through the olive trees we saw
The twinkle of my vesper lamp;
Wilt kiss me now as then, my Phaon?

Nay, loosen not with gentle force
The clasp of my restraining arms;
I will not let thee go, my Phaon!

See, deftly in my trailing robe
I spring and draw the lattice close;
Is it not night again, my Phaon?

THE FAREWELL

Beloved, stand face to face,
And, lifting lids, disclose to me the grace,
The Paphic fire that lingers yet and lies
Reflected in thy eyes.

Phaon, my sole beloved,
Stand not to my mad passion all unmoved;
O let, ere thou to far Panormus sail,
One hour of love prevail.

Dear ingrate, come and let
Thy breath like odor from a cassolet,
Thy smile, the clinging touch of lips and heart
Anoint me, ere we part.

Phaon, I yearn and seek
But thee alone; and what I feel must speak
In all these fond and wilful ways of mine,
O mortal, made divine!

My girl friends now no more
Hang their sweet gifts of garlands at my door;
Dear maids, with all your vanished empery
Ye now are naught to me.

Phaon, thy galley rides
Within the harbor's mouth and waits the tides
And favoring winds, far to the west to fly
And leave me here to die.

The brawny rowers lean
To bend long-stroking oars; and changing scene
And fairer loves than mine shall soon efface
This last divine embrace.

Phaon, the lifting breeze!
See, at thy feet I kneel and clasp thy knees!
Go not, go not! O hear my sobbing prayer,
And yield to my despair!

DARK-EYED SLEEP

Dark-eyed Sleep, child of Night,
Come in thy shadow garment to my couch,
And with thy soothing touch,
Cool as the vesper breeze,
Grant that I may forget;

Bestow condign release,
A taste of rest that comes with endless sleep;
Lure off the haunting dreams,
The dire Eumenides
That torture my repose.

For I would live a space
Though Phaon has forsaken me, nor yet
Be found on shadow fields
Among the lilies tall
Of pale Persephone.

THE CLIFF OF LEUCAS

Afar-seen cliff
Stands in the western sea
Toward Cephallenian lands.

Apollo's temple crowns
Its whitened crest,
And at its base
The waves eternal beat.

Its leap has power
To cure the pangs
Of unrequited love.

Thither pale lovers go
With anguished hearts
To dare the deep and quench
Love's slow consuming flame.

Urged to the edge
By maddening desire,
I, too, shall fling myself
Imploring thee,
Apollo, lord and king!

Into the chill
Embraces of the sea,
Less cold than thine, O Phaon,
I shall fall —
Fall with the flutter of a wounded dove;

And I shall rise
Indifferent forever to love's dream,
Or find below
The sea's eternal voice,
Eternal peace.

EPIGRAMS

THE DUST OF TIMAS

This is the dust of Timas! Here inurned
Rest the dear ashes where so late had burned
Her spirit's flame. She perished, gentle maid,
Before her bridal day and now a shade,
Silent and sad, she evermore must be
In the dark chamber of Persephone.
When life had faded with the flower and leaf,
Each girl friend sweet, in token of her grief,
Resigned her severed locks with bended head,
Beauty's fair tribute to the lovely dead.

THE PRIESTESS OF ARTEMIS

Maidens, that pass my tomb with laughter sweet,
A voice unresting echoes at your feet;
Pause, and if any would my story seek,
Dumb as I am, these graven words will speak;
Once in the vanished years it chanced to please
Arista, daughter of Hermocleides,
To dedicate my life in virgin bliss
To thee, revered of women, Artemis!
O Goddess, deign to bless my grandsire's line,
For Saon was a temple priest of thine;
And grant, O Queen, in thy benefic grace,
Unending fame and fortune to his race.

PELAGON

Above the lowly grave of Pelagon,
Ill-fated fisher lad, Meniscus' son,
His father placed as sign of storm and strife
The weel and oar, memorial of his life.

FINIS



Lesbos — possibly where Sappho spent her final days